



# EGYPT

AND THE

## GREAT SUEZ CANAL.

*A Narrative of Travels.*

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# PREFACE.

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OF the fifteen Letters on Egypt contained in this volume, eight first appeared in January and February, 1855, in the '*Journal des Débats*,' where my honoured friend M. Sylvestre de Sacy, Member of the French Academy, kindly wished they should appear, from time to time, as I wrote them upon my travels. I afterwards published, in the same Journal, the six other Letters, written from notes which I made upon the spots visited. To all these I have added, in this volume, a Letter upon Egyptian Architecture.

I have had but one object in writing the following pages : to lead to a better appreciation of Egypt, and of the generous efforts which, during half a century, she has made to acquire the benefits of civilization. Among Mohammedan countries, Egypt is the one which may justly lay claim to the largest share of the sympathies of Christian Europe, apart even from either the



reminiscences of her past glories, or of the ties which bind her to England and France, more closely than to any other nations she has taken as her models.

I may perhaps be considered too enthusiastic a eulogist of European civilization, and may have represented it in too favourable a light, in comparison with nations less advanced than ourselves. The truth is, that I have derived much information from the contrast; and I believe the opinions I have expressed, whether of approval or censure, do not exceed the limits of truth and justice. In rendering legitimate homage to our relative superiority, I do not shut my eyes to the vices which disgrace Christian countries, nor to the virtues which semi-barbarous nations exhibit: but, in estimating all at their true value, I would urge the twofold duty, of ameliorating the condition of others, and of carrying our own to a higher stage of advancement. New destinies are opening on the East, and especially on Egypt; and Europe would be very culpable in neglecting to apply all her intelligence and disinterested sympathy to the regeneration of these people. In my opinion, it would be doing very ill service to the East, to attempt to shake its religious faith. The sublime idea of the unity of

God, which prevails throughout the countries subject to the law of the Koran, opens a very hopeful and important ground of community with Christianity. The great want of a radical change lies in the deplorable state of the national morality; this, however, has not arisen out of the Mohammedan religion, but preceded its introduction for many ages. It is true that, although Mohammedanism did not create this state of morals, it has not reformed them; this task we may hope is reserved for the happier and more efficient influences of European civilization.

These considerations will be found developed in the following Letters: I wish merely to explain here the occasion of the publication of this Work.

When M. Ferdinand de Lesseps, who enjoys the confidence and friendship of the Viceroy Mohammed Said, received the commission to form the Universal Company, for the project of opening the Isthmus of Suez, he kindly proposed to me to participate in a work so important to the highest interests of civilization. I accepted the proposal; and when the scientific Commission of Engineers which he assembled started, in November 1855, on their expedition to study and determine the question concerning the va-

rious localities, I accompanied them. It was during this expedition, which lasted two months and a half, that I wrote these Letters. I give them here nearly as they were written, and have hardly done more than add to their number.

The great enterprise with which I have been associated, deserves to be treated of more at length; and I have given some details which will make it better understood; at the same time they will show more clearly the impressions made upon me by a survey of this ancient country.

J. B. SAINT-HILAIRE.

*Paris, April, 1857.*

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# LETTERS ON EGYPT.

## INTRODUCTION.

### THE ISTHMUS OF SUEZ.

It is superfluous, at the present day, to enlarge upon the incalculable advantages which would result to the commerce of the world from the opening of the Isthmus of Suez,—a question which is considered by every intelligent and impartial mind as settled. The attention which has recently been drawn to this subject, and the consequent discussion of its merits, have placed it in its true light ; and a glance at the map will suffice to convince any one, that such a communication would lessen the distance between Europe and the East Indies three thousand leagues, or one half. This shortening of the route would be equivalent, in point of financial economy, to a saving of thousands of million francs, or, which is the same thing, to an increase

of revenue to that amount; whilst, in another and most important view, such a step would incalculably promote the progress of civilization, extending its benefits and influence to a vast portion of the inhabitants of the globe, who are at present very imperfectly within the reach of its blessings, or wholly excluded from its pale. Thus the interests of humanity, no less than those of commerce, conspire to render the opening of the Isthmus of Suez one of the most useful and honourable enterprises of the nineteenth century. With a view to exhibit the present exact state of this grand question in a clear and intelligible light, I shall divest my remarks of any needless technicality.

The project in question consists in opening a sea-canal from Suez to Pelusium, that is to say, from the Red Sea in a direct line to the Mediterranean, affording a passage to ships of the largest size and burden, from 250 to 300 feet wide and twenty-five to thirty feet deep. The project is entirely novel, and could neither have been conceived nor carried into execution in any previous age. With a view to facilitate the enterprise, a Grant was made by his Highness Mohammed Said, Viceroy of Egypt, to M. Ferdinand de Lesseps, dated November 30th, 1854.

The idea of connecting the two seas has indeed been mooted at various periods, but never otherwise than by a freshwater canal, supplied by the waters of

the Nile, and terminating, by a more or less complicated course, at Alexandria and at Suez. The present project is to supply the Canal from the sea, without any opening to the Nile, and simply to establish as short a communication as possible between the two roadsteads which continue along this Isthmus for twenty-nine leagues north and south. It does not cross Egypt, but merely follows the boundary which separates Africa from Asia, traversing the Desert, without at all encroaching on the interior of the fine country which it will so essentially benefit, by opening along its frontier a perpetual stream of civilization. This feature of the intended Canal distinguishes it from all previous projects, none having been hitherto framed upon the same idea, as history shows.

It is well known that from the remotest times there has existed a great canal, connecting the Nile and the Red Sea. This canal, projected by Necho, the son of Psammetichus, B.C. 630, was executed by Darius, son of Hystaspes, after the conquest of Egypt by the Persians. Herodotus, an eye-witness of what he relates, saw it in full activity fifty years after the death of Darius: it commenced at Bubastis, on the Nile, and, running west and afterwards southward, emptied itself into the Red Sea at Patymos. The Ptolemies kept it in repair, and improved it. Strabo, who is



still more exact than Herodotus, and who travelled in Egypt shortly before the Christian era, likewise saw it covered with vessels. The Roman Emperors, especially Adrian, made considerable additions to it. Subsequently the Khalifs, who at first repaired the works, left them eventually to decay, and the navigation appears to have entirely ceased toward the beginning of the ninth century; there still exist, however, numerous and evident traces of its former course.

General Bonaparte, who was charged by the Directory with the task of cutting through the Isthmus, and whose ardent genius at once comprehended the importance of such an enterprise, no sooner landed in Egypt than he hastened to Suez, to ascertain from personal inspection the nature of the localities, and to recommence, if possible, the work which had been undertaken by the Pharaohs, aided by all the helps which modern science and industry presented. He started from Cairo, December 24th, 1798, accompanied by Berthier, Caffarelli, Gantheaume, Monge, Berthollet, Costaz, and other members of the Institute, and some merchants who had obtained permission to join his escort. On the 30th he had the gratification of being the first to discover, north of Suez, vestiges of the ancient canal, which he followed for five leagues. After visiting the Wells of Moscs, he returned to Cairo by the Wady Toumilat, and saw near Belbeis, January

3rd, 1799, the other extremity of the canal of the Pharaohs.

The result of this expedition was, that the General directed an able engineer, M. Lepère, to draw up a Report on the communication between the Mediterranean and the Red Sea. This was a very difficult task, amidst all the accidents and occurrences of a disastrous war; and the Report was not transmitted to the First Consul until December 6th, 1800. It formed the basis of almost all the subsequent operations, which were guided by the valuable information it contained, although its author was occasionally led into error by unavoidable causes.

In this Report the assertion was advanced and sustained, after long study,—an echo of a very ancient tradition, dating as far back as Aristotle,—that the level of the Red Sea is higher than the level of the Mediterranean. According to the engineers, whose operations M. Lepère reported, without being responsible for them, the Red Sea was thirty-two feet above the level of the Mediterranean, although only thirty leagues distant. This very extraordinary result was not admitted by all the scientific men of the period. The illustrious Laplace, according to M. Paulin Talabot, uniformly protested against this opinion, which, militating with his theories of the system of the globe and the equilibrium of its seas, he could not admit,

however clearly it might appear to be demonstrated. Fourier, the great mathematician, and the profound author of the '*Théorie de la Chaleur*,' shared the opinion of Laplace, and repeatedly expressed it to many of his friends, from whom I have heard it.

It has been since proved, by many incontestable facts, that the results at which the sagacity and genius of Laplace and Fourier arrived, were correct, in opposition to those of the engineers of the Commission; and that the two seas, allowing for tidal differences, are perfectly on a level. 'This has been verified by hydrographical experiments, and placed beyond dispute.

M. Lepère simply proposed to re-construct the ancient canal; and he calculated that the cost of the work would not exceed from twenty-five to thirty million francs. The supply of water was to be from the Nile at Bubastis, with a branch from Cairo up the river. From Bubastis its course ran by the Wady Tournilat, in the direction of Lake Timsah, and then turned south toward Suez and the Red Sea. The idea was always that of constructing a purely Egyptian canal, intended to connect Cairo with Suez, and the Nile with the Arabian Gulf. The section was small, and only large barques were to pass through it. General Bonaparte would have executed it of these restricted dimensions, had he remained in Egypt, and would

have been contented with a navigation, between Suez and Alexandria, analogous to that on our celebrated Canal du Midi, likewise called the Canal des Deux Mers. There is at least no indication that he entertained any larger project; the Report of M. Lepère, drawn up by his order, scarcely suggests a suspicion of any other design.

In this Report, however, beside the principal intention, another thought, which was the true one, although it led to no result, is visible. This able engineer, whilst examining the localities with other designs, was struck by the natural facilities which existed for the establishment of a direct communication by a canal between Suez and Pelusium. This was indeed the canal which would cut through the Isthmus; the other would have served only to supply the wants of Egypt, without opening any new passage.

M. Lepère appears to have admitted that this direct canal, if it could be formed, would be navigable for such ships of war as corvettes and frigates, which the other could not admit. Two considerations however prevented his carrying into execution this grand scheme; in the first place he regarded the difficulties of the roadstead at Suez almost insurmountable; and, secondly, he inferred from some inconclusive observations by General Andréossy, that it was absolutely impossible to establish a port at Pelusium.

The project, therefore, of a canal from Suez to Pelusium was, on grounds thus inconsiderately admitted, deemed chimerical; and in a short time the other was likewise abandoned, notwithstanding its being regarded as so easy of adoption and entailing so little cost.

Mehemet Ali, amidst his vast designs for the regeneration of Egypt, occasionally entertained the idea of the Suez Canal; but, as the schemes proposed to him referred only to the connection of the Nile with the Red Sea, he rejected them all, for very weighty and excellent political reasons; not wishing to open to foreign navies a channel into the heart of Egypt.

Affairs remained nearly in this state until 1840, when events of considerable importance attracted the attention of Europe to Egypt. The fears of a general war were soon calmed; but the consideration of the problems which this country offered to science were revived,—especially that of the level of the two Seas; and in 1841, it was proved by the surveys of some English officers—in other respects imperfect—that the Egyptian Commission were mistaken, and that the Red Sea was not of a higher level, as had been believed.

In 1834, Major-General Chesney had supported this opinion before the Parliamentary Committee of Inquiry, asserting, from a simple inspection of the localities, and without having made any actual survey, that the idea of a difference of level was erroneous. Although this

was merely a scientific inquiry, it was closely connected with the opening of the Isthmus, and the facilities to the works depended materially on its results.

In February, 1841, M. Linant Bey, chief engineer to his Highness the Viceroy of Egypt, who had been many years engaged on this subject, formed, in conjunction with Mr. Anderson (a Director of the Peninsular and Oriental Company), and Messrs. John and George Gliddon, a Company for preparing the construction of a direct canal from Suez to Pelusium. M. Linant Bey demonstrated its feasibility by careful investigation. This first Company however came to nothing.

In 1846 the project of M. Linant Bey was resumed by a new Company, formed by the efforts of M. Enfantin, and of which Messrs. Stephenson, Negrelli, and Paulin Talabot were the principal members. This was named "*Société d'Études du Canal de Suez*," and it purposed to carry out the scheme of M. Linant Bey, and to verify his assertion that it was possible to create "*une sorte de Bosphore dans le désert de Suez*."

The question of the level of the Seas was, in consequence, resumed in 1847, and was now completely solved, by European and Egyptian engineers, under the direction of M. Bourdaloue, well known for his consummate skill in such operations, and M. Linant Bey. These investigations into the nature of the

ground laid the basis of a new project for uniting the two Seas. Toward the close of 1847, M. Paulin Talabot, who had not been to Egypt, published the results of the labours undertaken for determining the question of the levels; and, in an important Report which he drew up, the great fact was asserted, that, allowing for tidal differences, the level of the two Seas which it was proposed to connect was precisely the same. The merit of solving this question belongs to those engaged in the operations of 1847.

It was not however merely with a scientific view that M. Paulin Talabot executed this work; he desired likewise to construct a canal, of which he produced a plan, according to which, the canal did not terminate at Pelusium, but went from Suez to Cairo, followed and crossed the Nile, and emptied itself into the port of Alexandria.

The result of the operations of 1847, in negating those of 1799, meanwhile excited the interest of the scientific world; and to satisfy the demands which the honour of the former Commission was supposed to make, M. Sabatier, Consul-General of France, requested of his Highness the Viceroy to allow a second survey to be made. This took place in 1853, under the direction of M. Linant Bey, and it fully confirmed the results of the labours of 1847. M. Linant Bey found only one trifling divergence of a few inches.

The two Seas were thus ascertained to be on a level, and this fact being established formed the basis of all subsequent projects.

The Company, of which Messrs. Negrelli, Stephenson, and Paulin Talabot were the chief members, was nearly broken up, and for seven years appeared to have abandoned any ulterior enterprise; when the Concession made to M. de Lesseps for a sea-canal from Suez to Pelusium has recently brought their project of a canal into fresh notice. The grant was dated the end of November, 1854; and the two engineers of his Highness the Viceroy, MM. Linant Bey and Mougel Bey, drew up a complete specification, which appeared at Cairo, March 20th, 1855. Meantime MM. Baude and Paulin Talabot published, in the '*Revue des Deux Mondes*' (March and May, 1855), two articles, reviving and developing the scheme of a canal which had been projected in 1847.

This canal, which was to run from Suez to Cairo, where it crossed the Nile, and from Cairo to Alexandria, is the one called the indirect line, as opposed to that of MM. Linant Bey and Mougel Bey, which passes directly from Pelusium to Suez.

The canal proposed by M. Paulin Talabot is nearly a hundred leagues in length,—the direct line is only thirty: the former has twenty or twenty-four locks,—the direct line has only one. The former crosses the



Nile, either on the water or on a canal-bridge ; whereas the direct line only crosses the Desert, where it meets the Bitter Lakes, Lake Timsah, and Lake Menzaleh. The crossing the Nile presents obstacles which the Author himself admits to be gigantic, and very difficult to overcome. The direct line offers only ordinary difficulties, which engineering skill can easily surmount. The indirect line disturbs all the hydrographic system of Lower Egypt, with which the direct line does not at all interfere : the former terminates at the port of Alexandria, where there is insufficient space ; whilst the latter debouches at Pelusium, on a beach as extensive as could be desired, and with an excellent anchorage.

It is unnecessary to insist upon this parallel, which is more particularly in the province of the engineer, although such questions are not excluded from common-sense considerations. The indirect line has been finally condemned by the most competent judges ; and the only subject for discussion that remains, since the publication of the plan of MM. Linant Bey and Mougel Bey, is the direct line, viz. the sea-canal which is intended to divert from the Red Sea to the Mediterranean the whole trade which at present is carried round the Cape of Good Hope. I do not dwell on the project of MM. Alexis and Émile Barrault (January 1st of last year) mentioned in the ‘ Revue

des Deux Mondes,' together with that of M. Paulin Talabot; it suffices to say that this project increases the number of difficulties.

The scheme of M. Paulin Talabot, we see, is the ancient enlarged canal of the Pharaohs, the Ptolemies, the Romans, the Khalifs, and of M. Lepère. It crosses Egypt, and is only constructed for that country; but, instead of terminating at the Nile, it crosses the river, which it connects both with the Mediterranean and the Red Sea. This is not a sea-canal, nor does it solve the real problem which engages the attention of this age; the great ships employed in the commerce of the East Indies, can never, like mere barques, pass through so many locks; thus probably losing more time than the passage round the Cape of Good Hope requires, to say nothing of all the damage likely to be incurred. In the state of affairs at Midsummer 1855, one doubt alone remained to be removed in all impartial and reasonable minds,—whether the construction of a sea-canal, terminating at Suez and Pelusium, passing through the isthmus without locks, was as practicable and easy of execution as was alleged. Was it possible to form an artificial Bosphorus between the Red Sea and the Mediterranean, and to re-establish the communication which nature had originally formed between these two Seas? This question M. Ferdinand de Lesseps wished to see defini-

tively solved before the formation of a Universal Company, which the Viceroy's Grant empowered him to constitute. He applied to the ablest engineers of Europe, and invited them to form a Commission, to inspect personally the localities, to investigate the proposals of MM. Linant Bey and Mougél Bey, and to decide definitively between the opposing lines. At the same time he made an appeal to all the nations the most experienced in such enterprises. To this Commission England contributed Messrs. M'Clellan and C. Manby, eminent engineers, 'as also Captain H. Hewett, since deceased, and succeeded by Captain Harris of the East India Company's Navy. Austria sent M. de Negrelli, Councillor of State and Inspector-General of Railroads; Piedmont, M. Palcoca, Minister of Public Works at Turin; Holland, M. Conrad, Chief Engineer of the Water-Staat; Prussia, M. Lentze, Director of the Works on the Vistula; Spain, Don Montesinos, Director of Public Works at Madrid; France, Rear-Admiral de Genouilly, Captain Jaurès, Member of the Admiralty Board, M. Renaud, Inspector-General and Member of the Board of Bridges and Highways, and M. Lieussou, Hydrographer and Engineer of the Navy. The competency of such a Commission is beyond all question.

The Commission met at Paris, October 30th and 31st, 1855, the majority of the members above named

being present. MM. Linant Bey and Mougel Bey likewise attended the meeting, together with M. de Lesseps, M. Jomard, and myself. Two sittings were held, in which it was determined that the Commissioners should set out for Egypt on November the 8th, embarking at Marseille. It was also decided that new soundings should be ordered to be made in the Bay of Pelusium, during the time we were engaged in exploring the Isthmus; and the execution of this task was confided, under the direction of M. Lieussou, to M. Larousse, Hydrographic Engineer of the Navy, an officer equally intelligent and zealous, who was at that time engaged on similar works in the Gulf of Genoa, for the French Government.

The International Commission arrived at Alexandria on the 18th of November, and immediately applied themselves to their work. The railroad, which has still only a single line of rail, not being clear, and the Indian Mail being hourly expected, signalled by the telegraph from Suez, we were obliged to remain three days at Alexandria. The Commissioners employed this time in visiting the two roadsteads,—one on the south-west, called the Old Port,—and the other, on the north-east, called the New Port; although the latter, which is at present abandoned, is that which was principally used by the ancients, in the times of the Ptolemies and the Roman emperors.

The Commissioners were particularly interested in investigating the nature of the rocks and sands, which are the same along the whole line of coast, and the laws of the currents. From Marabout to the Point of Aboukir, the rocks of the coast and the edges of the reefs are formed of arenaceous calcareous freestone, which show evident traces of destruction. The sandy debris of this freestone, accumulating behind the reefs, and in the indentures of the coast, have formed, west of Alexandria, the bank of the Great Port and the beach of Marabout; and, on the east, the beaches of the New Port and Ramlé. All this coast appears to be sheltered from any deposits of sand, drifted from any other quarter; and it undergoes no change. The proof of this is to be seen in the fact, that a Roman palace, recently discovered at Ramlé, stands at the water's edge, precisely as at the period of its construction.

The Commissioners were received, November 23rd, at the fortified camp of the Saidieh, by his Highness the Viceroy, Mohammed Said, who, during their stay in Egypt, honoured them with the greatest attention and the most enlightened munificence, with a view to mark in a public manner the importance which he attaches to this great enterprise. He requested the Commission to extend their inquiry, beside the subject of opening the Isthmus of Suez, to some points con-

cerning the internal navigation of the country ; and among others, to the question of a second Barrage, which he proposes to establish at Selseleh, beyond Thebes, in Upper Egypt. This inquiry led the Commission to prosecute their voyage as far as the Island of Philæ ; but I shall pass over this excursion, a narrative of which would lead me too far from my present subject.

We returned to Cairo, December 12th, and started again on the 15th for Suez, arriving there in the afternoon of the following day ; having passed the night at the eighth Post-station in the Desert, which is about half the journey.

It was at Suez that the labours of the Commission were really to commence : these consisted of a personal examination of facts, of which they alone could judge, or of a verification of inquiries prosecuted under their orders and those of M. de Lesseps, relating to soundings and borings in the Desert, and in the two roadsteads of the Red Sea and the Mediterranean.

The Commissioners spent five days at Suez, in exploring the head of the Gulf, and determining, by actual inspection the spot for the entrance to the Canal. They consulted native pilots, and visited the quarries of Attaka, a mountain near the city, which will partly supply the materials required in the construction. The most important facts were elicited in

these various explorations: in the first place, it was ascertained that all the existing maps of the roadstead of Suez were incorrect, excepting that of Commander Moresby: this was completed by new soundings, which were added to the trigonometrical surveys already known.

The roadstead is ample and secure, capable of receiving more than five hundred ships. The depth varies from sixteen to forty feet, with a bottom of soft mud, but affording an excellent anchorage. The English corvette 'Zenobia,' which we visited, had been three years a coal-depôt for the service of the Indian Mail. She lies in the most exposed situation, and yet during these three years her anchors have never started, nor her cables sustained any injury: her communication with shore has not been interrupted a single day. The anchorage is entered by two deep and safe channels, large enough to admit of tacking at all times, at the entrance and outlet, and opening with a depth of fifty to sixty-five feet. The NNW. wind prevails in all seasons, blowing almost uninterruptedly from March to December, and alternating during the rest of the year with the SSE. and WSW. winds. It is never dangerous; the WSW., which is the most violent, is hardly more to be feared; in short, it appears that the force of the winds in these quarters never raises the water above three feet. The alluvium

is not formidable, and the bottom of the roadstead has not been perceptibly raised for centuries.

From all these facts the Commissioners arrived at the conclusion, that the roadstead of Suez has naturally all the requisites to form the head of the canal between the two seas. The necessary depth would only require 5200 feet for the south pier, and 3900 for that of the north; and the Commission has succeeded in simplifying the original plans, so as materially to reduce the cost.

On the morning of December 21st we set out on our expedition into the Desert, having a distance of thirty leagues to travel from Suez to Pelusium, without reckoning circuitous ways. In a subsequent letter I shall give an account of our caravan, and shall limit my remarks here to the International Commission and its labours.

Mounted on dromedaries and asses, and sometimes on foot, we followed the line of the canal through the Desert; and ten entire days were spent by the engineers in making a careful ocular inspection, which had not before been attempted, and the advantages of which nothing else could supply.

On the day of our departure, we stopped at noon to dine, at a spot where the first traces of the ancient canal were visible, and also very near the third boring, the two others being situated in the roadstead of



Suez itself, and having been examined by the Commissioners on their route. At a depth of three feet, the water obtained was brackish and intolerably bitter. Our engineers examined the stuff which was raised in boring, in order to ascertain the nature of the sub-soil.

Throughout the whole of this journey we followed the bed of the ancient canal of the Pharaohs and the Ptolemies. In some places it was 130 to 160 feet wide,—an enormous width for the small vessels of those times,—and was occasionally twenty to twenty-five feet deep. The cuttings are so indurated that in some parts they might be mistaken for constructions of masonry. In the afternoon we examined the fourth boring. After passing through four or five feet of sand, a depth of about ten feet of argillaceous earth succeeded, then a kind of calcareous marl extending to the depth of twenty-five feet, and at thirty-five feet plastic clay. I give these details, as the same geological formation extends nearly throughout the entire Isthmus. Specimens from all these borings were collected, which have since been submitted to our illustrious geologist M. Élie de Beaumont; and all the different materials extracted were carefully noted. Similar care will be hereafter observed, when the works of the sea-canal shall be in the course of execution, and archæology will doubtless reap a rich harvest

from this source. In these parts there are said to exist bilingual monuments, which the Persians left at the period of their invasion, and the discovery of which could be only second in importance to the celebrated Rosetta Stone. Nineveh would receive elucidation from the hieroglyphics.

On the surface of the ground we also found very beautiful lamellar gypsum, and great quantities of sea-shells, analogous to those found at the present day in the Red Sea and Mediterranean. This is a manifest proof, independent of the occurrence of immense banks of salt, that the two seas once communicated, and that the Isthmus was covered with water. We also began here—on a soil considered so sterile—to meet with shrubs and brushwood, which continued more and more thickly all the way to Pelusium.

On the morning of December 22nd we examined the fifth boring, the geological formation of which was the same as that of the fourth. The brackish water we had previously met with no longer appeared, and the lateral edges of the hole remained as sharply defined as when first excavated. Every now and then our animals stumbled in holes covered by a crust of indurated sand, which broke under their weight.

On the morning of the 23rd we stopped upon a

hillock, forty or fifty feet high, the geological character of which baffled our scientific companions, being a *pêle-mêle* of the most heterogeneous materials. Various conjectures were suggested, but none satisfactory; and the subject will be again examined, when the canal which is to pass near this spot shall be excavated.

Two Arabs of the brigade of Egyptian engineers joined us at this spot, which may serve as a landmark, and brought the Commissioners the plans for the proposed canal, which they spread out on the sand for examination. At this point of the Bitter Lakes we were forty feet below the level of the Mediterranean. In the evening we encamped at Sheik-Ennedek, where was the tomb of an Arab Santon, who had been greatly venerated by the people of the country. The shrubs were very abundant and somewhat tall. We everywhere observed traces of the waters of the Nile, which, in unusually great inundations, reach this spot, and in subsiding leave a considerable deposit, especially around the shrubs.

The next day, proceeding westwards into the Wady Toumilat, we came to the Bir Abou-Ballah, the well of the Father of Dates. The water was fifteen feet deep, and tolerably good to drink. At a little distance we passed a flock of black sheep, tended by a remarkably handsome and graceful young Arab, shouldering

his gun. The family was encamped a few yards off under a tent, and engaged in preparing the morning meal. These solitudes are therefore not wholly uninhabitable, and other evidence of this fact is seen in the ruins of many towns, which we meet with almost daily. The sight of these living beings, in such a spot, gave a feeling of pleasure which I still retain.

By ten o'clock we were standing on the shore of Lake Timsah. From the downs which command it, at an elevation of fifty or sixty feet, we had a view over this magnificent basin, half filled with water, which might easily be converted into an inland port of any size. We encamped in the evening at Ramses, an ancient Egyptian town mentioned in the Bible, where we found, amongst numerous remains, a granite bas-relief covered with hieroglyphics, the bed of the ancient canal, and the mud of the Nile as abundant as in the plains of Thebes. The waters, which had shortly before receded, were not more than two or three leagues distant from us.

We kept Christmas-day by making excursions in the environs, without striking our tents. The following morning we started again early, and returned north-east toward Pelusium. At nine o'clock, near El-Guisr, we joined a body of Egyptian engineers under the direction of M. Nottinger. The borings had already reached forty-three feet, and they had

to descend to sixty. This is the highest point of the entire line of the canal. At this spot the cutting will perhaps be as much as fifty feet in a short distance, which is nothing formidable to the engineer. In the evening we encamped at Bir Abou-Eurouq, in the lagunes of Lake Menzaleh, along which our route lay as far as Pelusium and the Mediterranean.

In the evening of the 27th we encamped near some ruins of an ancient town, the Magdal of the Bible, the Roman Magdolum. Here we found traces of the encampment, a year before, of M. de Lesseps, with MM. Linant Bey and Mougel Bey; they were quite fresh, and the bank of sand heaped around each tent, to exclude the air, was still there. This is sufficient proof, that the great driftings of sand, so often mentioned as an obstacle to the projected canal, are of very rare occurrence, and little formidable even if real.

On the morning of December 28th, we at length reached Pelusium, the end of our journey. Here we rested until the 31st, to explore the coast in every direction, and to examine and ascertain the facilities it presented for the establishment of a port, or rather for the outlet of the canal.

The Bay of Pelusium has a bad reputation; but this has been given it by persons who have never seen it, or who at most have passed at forty leagues' distance, on the route from Alexandria to Beyrout. We found

this bay entirely different to the representation we had received of it; the pretended sea of mud is a mere chimera. At Pelusium the shore is composed of a clean and compact sand, and the water is quite as clear as that of the Seine.

We followed the coast eastwards for three leagues, to beyond El-Gerreh, and nearly as far west, to Tineh: the beach is the same throughout. We went about three leagues out to sea, in the offing, to join the Egyptian frigate which awaited us; but we were certainly not fortunate enough to see those shifting mud-banks which are said to obstruct all navigation in this inhospitable roadstead!

The International Commission made all the necessary examinations of this coast; on land they made a personal investigation, and at sea the soundings were taken by M. Larousse, with the greatest precision and care. Seconded in these labours by M. Darnaud, a French engineer in the service of his Highness the Viceroy, and by M. Cianciolo, an Italian engineer, he explored the whole coast, for more than a month; sometimes by land, at others on board the steam-frigate which the Egyptian Government liberally placed at our disposal. All his operations, directed by the instructions of the Commission, were most successfully accomplished.

From all these data, the International Commission

has deduced the following conclusions, which the scientific world may henceforth regard as established.

The Bay of Pelusium, enclosed between the promontory of Damietta and Cape Casius, is thirty-seven miles wide, and twenty in depth. It faces the north-east, and is bordered by a narrow strip of fine sand, over which the sea washes in rough weather. This has not changed perceptibly,\* in form or position, within the records of history, and may perhaps be considered unchangeable.

Out at sea, in front of this strip, extends a zone of similar fine sand, which terminates at a depth of thirty-two feet; and from that point commences, it is said, a belt of mud, which comes from the Nile and goes to the lowest depths of the Mediterranean. The bottom everywhere slopes off gently and regularly; the greatest declivity is at the height of Tanis, where there are twenty-six feet of water at a distance of a mile and a half from the beach: westward of this point it remains nearly the same as far as Damietta. On the east it diminishes perceptibly to Pelusium, where the same depth of water is 8000 yards from the shore.

The wind blows from the WNW. during two-thirds of the year, chiefly in winter. These winds are the most violent; but, when the weather is fine, as is frequently the case, the solar breezes set in, in the

Bay, and the permanence of these alternating land and sea breezes would in all seasons greatly facilitate the entrance and exit of a port. The currents are almost null; they are perfectly irregular, running onewhile west, at another east. The level of the water scarcely varies more than two feet three inches, the difference between the extremes being about three feet, and the utmost rise of the tide being only one foot. The deposits of sand in the Bay of Pelusium are as old as the Nile: the increase from one century to another is imperceptible.

From all these observations it is evident, that the sands at present deposited by the Nile offer no obstacle to the formation of a port in the Bay of Pelusium. The only fear would be from the shifting sands, carried in various directions along the coast by storms from the north-west and north-east: but, by carrying out the entrance to the port into the belt of mud, the sands will be prevented penetrating it: they will be stopped outside the piers, where moreover, as shown by the invariableness of the shore, their accumulation will probably be very inconsiderable. Should it however become inconvenient, there would always be the resource of allowing the shore to gain, by carrying the head of the piers so far out to sea, which, the engineers assert, would be attended with only a trifling annual expence.

The materials necessary for the construction of the



port would be brought from the quarries on the Syrian coast, and from the islands of Cyprus, Rhodes, and Scarpanto. The mouth of the port would be carried a little more to the west than in the original plan : its site would be nearly at the height of the ancient Tanis, where the projection formed by the Said mouth has decreased continually since the obliteration of that branch. A channel 1300 feet wide, and running SW. and NE., would suffice. The north pier would be carried out 9800 feet, to a depth of thirty-two feet ; while the south pier would stop at the depth of twenty-six feet. The two piers, thirty-two and twenty feet wide at the top, would be raised six feet above the water, and surmounted with a parapet.

On the morning of December 31st we went on board the Egyptian frigate the ' Nile,' Commander Abdoul-Achmet, which had cruised for more than a month in the Bay to take our soundings ; and in twenty hours she returned with us to Alexandria, where we brought the tidings of our success. This was indeed immense ; and on the 3rd of January the International Commission forwarded to his Highness the Viceroy a Report, detailing the results of their expedition. They declared plainly and openly, " that the direct Canal from Suez to Pelusium offers the only solution to the problem in question, and that there is no other practicable means of connecting the Red Sea and the

Mediterranean; that the execution of this sea-canal is easy, and its success unquestionable; that the two ports to be formed, at Suez and Pelusium, present only ordinary difficulties; the one at Suez opening into a wide and secure roadstead, accessible at all times, and with twenty-six feet of water and one mile of beach,—and the port at Pelusium being situated between the mouths of Oum Fareg and Oum Ghémilé, with twenty-six feet of water and nearly a mile and a half of beach, and having an excellent anchorage, with all facilities for getting under sail.” Lastly, the Commission added, that the total cost of the canal would not exceed the two hundred million francs calculated in the original estimates.

The Commissioners, since their return to Europe at the end of January, have been actively engaged in drawing up a detailed and definitive Report: this will, I am assured, fully satisfy all who are competent to form an opinion in these matters. The preliminary Report, however, suffices to content for the present the impatience of the public, and to dispel the doubts which a prudent caution might still suggest as to the possibility of this great work.

Such then is the present position of this enterprise, which aims at opening a new route to the commerce of the world,—effecting in the nineteenth century a greater revolution than that produced by the disco-

very of the passage round the Cape of Good Hope. In Egypt, Austria, Piedmont, Holland, France, and England, public opinion has pronounced strongly in favour of the enterprise, and the Company formed by M. Ferdinand de Lesseps has everywhere met with warm sympathy. The necessary funds are already nearly raised, considerable as they are, and every nation is invited to contribute to them. The enterprise will thus bear the mark of the civilizing character, which ought to distinguish it from all others.

If then, as we see, the question is solved in a scientific as well as a financial view, what obstacles remain? and how is it that this important work, which is calculated to civilize and enrich the East—not to mention the advantages which the West will derive from it—has not yet been commenced? It is universally approved, and all the nations on the shores of the Mediterranean, or who may avail themselves of it, are impatient for its accomplishment: what then can retard it?

Various objections have been raised, which call for some reply, although they are not of equal weight. I do not refer to purely technical objections; these have disappeared before the examination of the Commission: but I direct the reader's attention to three arguments, which have recently been urged, and appear to have affected the minds of some. The first concerns

Alexandria, the prosperity of which city, it is alleged, would be menaced by the new canal and the port of Pelusium. The second objection relates to the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean, the navigation of which is so difficult, that sailing-vessels could never make regular or rapid voyages. The third concerns the interests of England, which, it is said, are opposed to a project that would undoubtedly increase the prosperity of her colonies, together with that of the rest of the world, but which is very gratuitously supposed to give her umbrage, and to excite alarm, by the uncertain consequences which may result from it.

The first of these arguments, advanced by the partisans of the direct line, cannot bear examination. In the first place, there will be no port, properly so called, at Pelusium, but merely the outlet of the canal. If it is found necessary to form any establishments, they will in all probability be in the centre of the Isthmus, in the magnificent basin of Lake Timsah, where the Canal of Wady Toumilat is to empty; or at Suez, a town which, although inconsiderable, has long been the entrepôt of an extensive commerce, and which, after the present year, will be connected by a railroad with Cairo and Alexandria.

Thus the idea of the port of Pelusium becoming a successful rival of Alexandria, and rising upon the ruins of that city, is a mere chimera. We may go

further: supposing even Pelusium to become a port like London or Liverpool, and to succeed in absorbing the entire commerce of the East Indies, how should this affect Alexandria? Can it be said that Alexandria now possesses the monopoly of this rich commerce, or that this is the source of her prosperity? Alexandria has no share in it whatever, and is not the less prosperous; she lays no claim to it in the future, but will maintain her importance without it. The sole source of the prosperity of this city is its being, from natural causes, the port of Egypt, the only outlet for her markets. Alexandria shares the fortunes of Egypt, in greatness or decay. At the time of our expedition, in 1798, the population of this city, which, under the Ptolemies and the first Emperors, contained at least 300,000 inhabitants, was reduced to 7000 or 8000 at most. At the present day, thanks to the civilizing reforms introduced by Mehemet Ali and his family, it numbers about 100,000. Without at all sharing in the commerce with India, its prosperity will go on to increase, as long as the fine country of which it is the key continues to progress in the advantages of civilization, as there is every hope it will.

Fifty years ago, six or seven ships entered the port of Alexandria yearly; 2357 entered in 1855, one-tenth of which were steamers. Fifty years ago, there were eight or ten English merchants resident in this

city, who lived there in a state of insecurity ; at present there are thousands. To the gratuitous fears which have been raised about her future prospects, Alexandria has given a very significant and decisive answer : in two days she subscribed, as the newspapers lately stated, fifteen million francs toward the enterprise of constructing the Canal of Suez ; and numerous applications, which came too late, were necessarily declined, as they exceeded the amount of contribution stipulated. Can it be imagined that the commercial classes of Alexandria are blind to their own interests, or that these are better understood at Paris than on the very spot ? This first argument has little weight, and I believe the second has no greater.

It is true that the navigation of the Red Sea is still very little known. The want of information on any subject naturally leads to exaggerated opinions, favourable or unfavourable ; nevertheless this Sea, which is now represented as unserviceable for navigation, has not been so wholly unknown as is pretended ; and the reason why the traffic by that passage is small, is that the countries bordering on it are in a barbarous state, and that some, notwithstanding their natural fertility, remain poor from want of cultivation, whilst others are so from the natural barrenness of the soil.

We learn from history that, in 1538, the Venetians,

who were at war with Soliman II., had there a considerable fleet, as well as their enemy, who were able to arm forty-one galleys and nine large vessels at Suez. · Some years later, the Portuguese had also a fleet there, in which was Don Juan de Castro, the sailor and historian, the narrative of whose voyage, and that of Soleiman Pasha, is given in the Collection of the Abbé Prévost. In 1787, Vice-Admiral Rosily, who commanded the expedition of the ‘Venus’ in this sea, affirmed that the dangers and difficulties of the navigation had been much exaggerated, adding, that there are numerous good anchorages, and the sea is only narrow.

Captain Rooke, an Englishman, who sailed there shortly before Admiral Rosily, was of the same opinion, which is in fact shared by all the English officers who have navigated this sea, and who have deposed to this effect in the Parliamentary Inquiries respecting the establishment of a steam service for the mails between England and her Asiatic colonies. Lastly, this is also the opinion of all the French officers who have been accustomed of late years to the navigation of the Red Sea. But a narrow sea is not an impracticable one,—witness the Straits of Dover, through which more ships sail than will ever pass through the Isthmus of Suez. A very remarkable circumstance is, that the East India Company

thought so little of the dangers of the Red Sea, that, at the close of the last century, they petitioned the Porte to grant them the absolute interdiction of that Sea to all European ships except their own, and this concession they obtained. The Sea was therefore navigable, since they feared competition upon it. Since 1774 they have conveyed the mails by this route from India to Europe. The Sultan soon withdrew the authorization he had granted, desiring to reserve the Arabian Gulf for the use of the pilgrimage to Mecca.

Leaving history, however, let us see the present state of things in reference to the navigation of the Red Sea; and here we are met by two incontestable facts. The Indian Mail reaches Suez twice a month; and, according to an English journal (the 'Engineer' of February 15th), it arrives with a regularity which is tantamount to certainty. This service, which is entrusted to the Peninsular and Oriental Company, is so well performed, that it is already in contemplation to double it, and to make four transits monthly instead of two.

It is then proved, that the Red Sea is easily navigable to steamers, and it only remains to be ascertained whether it is equally so for sailing-vessels. The Arabian Gulf has not been sufficiently navigated, for this particular question to be satisfactorily answered; but at the present time there are some



hundreds of native sailing-vessels which make constant voyages on it, both from shore to shore and along the coast. In 1854, 219 ships arrived at Suez; in 1855, there arrived 248. This increase is certainly inconsiderable, but it is sufficient to show that the navigation is not very difficult; some of these ships are of above a hundred tons burden, and not even decked. The sailors who manage them are unskilful, and inherit a traditionary and absurd timidity about their craft: it is clear that, if they can navigate the Red Sea, we can do so far better. If to these vessels, the number of which we know, as they are registered at Suez, whither they go starting almost all from Djeddah, those which carry on the traffic along the rest of the coast be added, it will be seen that the Red Sea is furrowed throughout by sailors who, notwithstanding their want of skill, are not afraid of the navigation. What, moreover, is there to prevent the establishment, if required, of a service of tug-boats, which might at all times enable sailing-vessels to perform the passage in eight days?

But, leaving the navigation of the Red Sea, another difficulty is met with in the Indian Ocean, from the Monsoons, which set in during six months of the year in one direction, and six months in the other. This is a real obstacle; but what results from it? Simply that sailing-vessels going through the sea-canal

will choose the period of their voyage: they will only make one annually, going and returning, calculating on favourable winds. This is all the inconvenience . they will encounter, and it is in fact the condition to which they are even now subject. They will only start a month later, as their voyage will be so much abridged by the passage across the Isthmus; and their departures, as well as their arrivals, will be regulated by new circumstances.

Is it not clear, however, that all this reasoning is based upon an hypothesis which daily loses weight, and which, even before the sea-canal shall be finished, will perhaps have absolutely none? Steam navigation is daily replacing that of sailing-vessels. The application of the high-pressure principle to large ships and long voyages is quite recent; and among the most enlightened seamen there is not one who does not foresee an entire revolution in this respect, at no distant time, which will be facilitated by the increasing employment of the screw.

Is it not to be expected, moreover, that if, as is probable, the great Indian trade should take the route of the Red Sea, it will follow more than any other this general tendency to substitute a more regular and constant propelling power for that of sails? In adopting the passage across the Isthmus of Suez, the object is to shorten the journey; why, therefore, neg-

lect this other means of shortening it still further by greater rapidity of motion? The obstacle to steam navigation round the Cape of Good Hope, is the impossibility of carrying both merchandise and coals: the coals occupy the place required for the cargo, and only passengers can be conveyed. These difficulties will be overcome, by establishing depôts of coal along the whole route, at Malta, Alexandria, Suez, Aden, and Bombay.

These various considerations in favour of the navigation of the Red Sea have recently been fully confirmed by the discussions which took place in the meeting of the International Commission, held in June last at Paris, with a view to settle the bases of their final Report. At this Meeting were present, beside the distinguished engineers who compose it, three naval officers who have navigated the Indian Sea and the Arabian Gulf: these were Rear-Admiral Rigault de Genouilly, Captain Jaurès, and Captain Harris, of the Indian Navy. Admiral Rigault de Genouilly commanded for a long time on the Station in the Indian Sea. M. Jaurès commanded the 'Jeanne d'Arc,' a frigate of 44 guns, in an exploring voyage from Aden to Djeddah and Massouah, which lasted four months. Captain Harris may be said to have passed his life on the Red Sea, having made seventy voyages from Calcutta to Suez: his testimony, which was confirmed

by his colleagues, went to prove, that the navigation of the Red Sea, for five hundred leagues, excepting the bottom of the Gulf from Ras Mohammed, is not more difficult than that of the Mediterranean or the Adriatic.

This second argument, therefore, is no more valid than the first, which rests on the probable ruin of Alexandria. The navigation of the Red Sea is not so difficult as has been represented; and steam will always be able to surmount the Monsoons, as the ships of the Peninsular and Oriental Company show.

I pass on to the last objection, which is entirely of a political character. The interests of England, it is feared, will always be opposed to the opening of the Isthmus. From this opinion I dissent, and will state some of my reasons for doing so.

The assertion that England will raise obstacles to this enterprise is mere assumption: England, in general, has viewed the project of this Canal with as much sympathy as other nations. The English Press, with perhaps only one exception, has expressed a favourable opinion on it: the most influential Companies, as the East India Company and the Peninsular and Oriental Company, have given in their adherence to the scheme: bankers, shipowners, merchants, and engineers have followed the example. It may therefore fairly be affirmed, that England, so far from rejecting

the project, desires it, and is prepared to take advantage of it. The same may be said of Holland, which is in an analogous position. It is only certain statesmen (if the report is true) who are alarmed, and who, in obedience to superannuated prejudices, would restrain the spirit of enterprise which now carries people toward the shores and markets of the East. It would not, however, be difficult to prove that their patriotism and their prudence are misled, and that public opinion takes a juster view than they do, of a question the moral importance of which is at least as great as the material.

It is almost absurd to imagine that England can be apprehensive of any competition in India: her sway there, which is daily increasing, and has only recently extended over a new kingdom, that of Oude, embraces two hundred millions of subjects or tributaries. She has moreover, as is well known, innumerable ships and vessels. She cannot fear the rivalry of Austria by way of Trieste, nor of Piedmont by Genoa, nor of Greece, Turkey, Russia, or Egypt. She has nothing to fear from the competition of France, which certainly cannot freight her ships at a cheaper rate, while her merchant navy is far less numerous than that of England. France has neither the capital, the commercial habits, nor the establishments, necessary to enter upon such remote enterprises on any grand scale.

The only competitors whom England may seriously have to fear in these parts are the United States, which already have a commerce there comprising nearly a fourth of the entire traffic. It is true that England possesses one-half, whilst all the other nations together have only the remaining fourth. Here then we see the real rivals of England,—she can have no others. But which of these countries will be most benefited by the opening of the Isthmus of Suez,—England or the United States? Has the latter country Gibraltar, the Ionian Isles, Malta, and Aden? and are Liverpool and London further off than New York?

Admitting then that England (or some individuals who affect to speak in her name and on her behalf,) desires to maintain her present exclusive monopoly in India, without introducing or permitting any change or modification, and, animated by a narrow-minded spirit of egotism, would attempt to exclude for ever all the nations bordering the Mediterranean from the commerce of the East, and to prevent their establishing an easy and lucrative route, by what right, we may ask, could any nation oppose the legitimate desire of all these countries, and bar the passage to them? By what right could the principle of monopoly be re-established, after the most solemn declarations in favour of free-trade? And, moreover, by what right can the British Colonies themselves, which

are equally interested in the question, be debarred this new outlet for their commerce? Would any one dare to maintain, openly before the world, or in any European Congress, that England has a right to sacrifice to her own individual interests—even if these were well understood—the interests of the whole human race? Who would encounter the shame and the responsibility of such an avowal?

If there is, at the present day, any truth clearly recognized in matters of political and international policy, it is, that no one party can be enriched by impoverishing the rest. The true secret of prosperity to a nation, as to an individual, is to contribute to an equal share of prosperity for those with whom they come in contact. The policy which the English nation, to its great honour, has for some years introduced and followed, rests on these enlightened principles of liberality and justice; and it cannot be imagined that any statesmen can long oppose the universal opinion of their own country, or support a line of policy so erroneous as well as so dishonourable.

This last argument therefore, in my opinion, is not much weightier than the other two. The English Government will surely not oppose the opening of this sea-canal, any more than the Red Sea will offer insurmountable obstacles to navigation, or than the proposed port of Pelusium will injure the continually

increasing prosperity of the port of Alexandria. I refer the reader, for more ample details, to the answer published in the *British Review* (April, 1856), to the hostile article which recently appeared in the *Edinburgh Review*; and I will conclude my remarks on this grand enterprise with the words of one of the ablest and best-informed politicians:—"The question of opening the Isthmus of Suez is settled,"—an assertion of which I have endeavoured to show the force as well as truth. After this preliminary account, I proceed to my Letters from Egypt.



## LETTER I.

## ARRIVAL AND RECEPTION.

Cairo, November 25, 1855.

ON my departure for Egypt, with M. Ferdinand de Lesseps and the International Commission, I promised to publish, in letters, some account of the country in which I was about to travel, in company with the scientific engineers engaged in deciding the great question of opening the Isthmus of Suez. I now address myself to the fulfilment of this promise. I do not pretend to enter scientifically into any of the problems which the monuments of Egypt present: these prodigious remains have been described again and again, better than I could depict them; and with regard to the mysteries concealed under the hieroglyphics, I disclaim any ability to decipher them. On these subjects I can therefore only state what every traveller in Egypt repeats, one from another.

Owing however to the peculiar circumstances connected with our travels, I shall have opportunities of gathering some new information and details relative to the present state of the country and its administration. The efforts which Egypt is making to attain to increased benefits of civilization merit the warmest sympathy of all the friends of humanity ; and she will soon be called to fulfil a great and important part, if, as there is every reason to hope, M. Ferdinand de Lesseps succeeds in the noble task which Mohammed Said has entrusted to him.

The International Commission set out from Marseille, November 8th, and reached Alexandria on the 18th, where Chevalier de Negrelli, who represents Austria, awaited its arrival. It was received at the port by M. Koenig Bey, the Secretary of Said Pasha, and his former instructor.

The arrival of the Commissioners in Alexandria, to whom the Consuls of the different nations, as well as the Minister of the Egyptian Marine, and the Governor of the city, came to pay a complimentary visit, naturally caused a great sensation. Being delayed at Alexandria for the departure of the railway train (there being as yet only a single line), they occupied this time in making some experiments in the roadstead. They proceeded westward to the fort of Marabout, where the French army formerly landed, and east-

ward to the village of Ramlé, half-way to Aboukir. In these two localities they investigated the nature of the rocks and sands along the coast, the Old Port, and the New Port, which last, despite its name, is no longer of any use.

Alexandria is a semi-European city; its grand square would not disgrace one of our principal cities in France. It boasts only two celebrated monuments of antiquity,—Pompey's Pillar and Cleopatra's Needle. Some very doubtful ruins barely indicate the ancient site of the famous Library, and of all the scientific establishments which the munificence of the Ptolemies and some of the Roman Emperors founded. Scarcely any trace remains, excepting in the name of the city, of its founder Alexander. In fact the glories of Alexandria have entirely passed into oblivion; she shares the fate of all great commercial cities, which are absorbed by the interests of the day far more than by their past history.

A very interesting discovery has recently been made, near Ramlé, at a spot called Cæsar's Camp. The remains of an extensive Roman palace, erected on the most beautiful situation upon the sea-coast, have been discovered. An inscription, engraved on a block of white marble, of which I took a copy, states that this palace had been presented to the Emperor Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, by the Tribunes of the Legions.

The date of its erection is further attested by the specimens of sculpture taken from the ruins. I noticed a hand of a young woman, which, although broken, showed perfect modelling and excellent taste, as well as the broken figure of a man and some other fragments. A very large mosaic was pointed out to us, in good preservation, representing a bust of Bacchus, holding a thyrsus and bunch of grapes. An inscription, fractured in the middle, informs us that this was made by order of a certain Sempronius.

Hassan Effendi, who is employed on these excavations, which he directs with all the intelligence of an engineer educated at Paris, has also brought to light a subterranean aqueduct and numerous trenches, with a Naumachia, which afford evidence that the waters of the Nile, whose inundation at this point approaches the coast, was formerly conducted thither. The spot is, at the present day, desert and sterile, the fact of its having been inhabited in ancient times being only attested by innumerable fragments of pottery and bricks. There must have been, in the time of the Romans, a charming village surrounding the imperial palace. I copied the two following inscriptions:—

IMP. CÆSARI.

M. AUREL. ANTONIN.

AUG. ARMEN. MEDIC. PARTHI.

GERMAN. SARMAT. MAUR.

TRIB. POTES. XXX.

IMP. VIII. COS. III. P. P.

TRIB. LEG. II. TR. FORT.

The marble on which this inscription is cut, is above three feet high,  $29\frac{1}{2}$  inches wide, 25 inches in thickness, and as perfect as if just taken from the quarry. It must have stood apart from the rest of the building, as a kind of altar, and, to all appearance, it was not set into any pediment or niche.

The second inscription is shorter; mutilated as it is I give it:—

. . . B. SEMPRON.

. . . TRAVIT.

These inscriptions, although not rare, I give as an addition to the epigraphic collections of the antiquary.

In passing a brief eulogy on the good Lazarist Fathers, and the Sisters of St. Vincent de Paul, I perhaps only repeat the opinion of many other travellers. I visited these two establishments, which are admirably maintained; the works of beneficence and charity performed here silently, unostentatiously, and with the most perfect self-denial, deserve to be commended all the more to general esteem and sympathy. The French language is taught here, with some other branches of knowledge, to a hundred boys and three hundred little girls.

The most laudable feature of this work of charity, is the perfect toleration which pervades it: all religions, all sects are admitted: Christians, Jews, Mohammedans, Greek schismatics, Protestants, may all send their children here, without fear of any other spirit of conversion than that of intelligence and love. The Sisters have an asylum for foundlings, one for orphans, and distribute outdoor as well as indoor relief: they moreover every morning dispense medicines, according to the prescriptions of a physician, to hundreds of sick people, mostly Arabs. Ophthalmia and blindness are of very frequent occurrence among the natives; and the care and attention bestowed in mitigating these sad infirmities, are perhaps the surest and gentlest means of winning converts to our faith and modes of life. The day I visited this institution 294 sick persons had received aid for their complaints.

Such a memento of France on the soil of Egypt appears to me worth all the recollections of battles and even of victories. These religious missionaries of civilization are daily effecting, quietly and peacefully, a modest but assured triumph. I wished to have also visited the school of the "*Frères de la Doctrine Chrétienne*," which is larger in point of numbers than those of the Lazarists, but to my regret I had not time to accomplish this.

On leaving Alexandria by the railroad,—which

extends to the river,—to go and present ourselves to his Highness the Viceroy, we had for the first time a view of the land of Egypt, fertilized by the Nile. On our left, we coasted along the Mahmoudieh, ploughed by as many barques as I have ever seen upon our canals ; to the right, lay Lake Mareotis, which is now nearly drained : it would be well if it were so altogether, that its basin might be either brought under culture, or receive the waters of the Nile. The sea-water burst into it, when the English, for strategical reasons in the last war, broke the dykes of Aboukir. This lake, which the Nile had filled from the remotest ages, and which supplied the city with excellent water and an abundance of fish, became salt and perfectly unserviceable. Such are the necessities and the disasters of war ! The Egyptian Government has never since been able to drain the salt water from the lake. The Mahmoudieh, constructed by Mehemet Ali in 1819, which joins the river at Atfé, twenty leagues east of Alexandria, supplies the place of the lake, and furnishes the city with water and navigation.

To those who have not seen the valley of the Nile and its Delta, a better idea of it can scarcely be given than by a comparison with the most fertile and best-cultivated marsh-land in the environs of Paris. The ground is perfectly smooth ; the Nile levels it by the annual deposit of its mud. Innumerable drains,

and canals of various sizes, convey the water in every direction, and retain it some time after the river has retired. It is an immense hydraulic network, covering the whole of Lower Egypt; and this system of irrigation, simple as it is fertilizing, is followed over the entire extent of country as far as the river reaches.

The general aspect of the land is that of the richest and best-manured soil, the humus being twenty-five to thirty feet thick, and even more. To any one at all acquainted with such matters, the soil of Egypt, fertilized yearly by this mud, must appear unrivalled in any part of the globe. This year, which is not a good one, the third crops of maize are being harvested, and there will doubtless be a fourth. The third harvest is splendid, and the ears of corn are at least as large as the finest in our climate.

This spectacle, so interesting to the agriculturist, continued as far as Boulak, the port of Cairo. The banks of the Nile, as far as the eye can reach, are perfectly regular plains, the monotony of which is only interrupted, from time to time, by groups of elegant palms, and Fellah villages, which, although built of mud and sun-baked bricks, at times stand out on the horizon, and, with the sun setting gloriously behind them, might almost be mistaken for the grand monuments of the Pharaohs. Amidst all this exuberance of natural production, the mass of the



population, notwithstanding their unquestionable progress in civilization, exhibit an appearance of wretchedness : on another occasion I shall attempt to point out some of the causes of this, which does not appear to me irremediable.

Our first visit at Cairo was to the citadel. We entered the mosque of Mehemet Ali, in which is his tomb : it commands a view over the whole city. This vast and rich edifice is constructed entirely of oriental alabaster, in a very beautiful style. At the entrance we had to take off our shoes, or encase our profane feet in slippers, in the same way as in our churches we uncover the head : the custom only differs, the sentiment is the same.

By the side of the mosque is the palace, which is not equal to that of Alexandria. We were shown the hall in which Mehemet Ali anxiously awaited—his horses all ready saddled for flight—the result of his orders for the massacre of the Mamelukes.

These feudal tyrants of Egypt, which they shared among them, were nearly fifty in number, each having troops under his command, which they employed in oppressing the country with the most frightful exactions. Jealous of the growing power of Mehemet Ali, who was already Pasha in the name of the Porte, they conspired to effect his ruin. They encamped, with all appearance of peace, before the gates of Cairo. The

intrepid Pasha, having discovered their plot, went unattended to visit them in their camp; and, in order the better to cloak his designs, invited them to a splendid banquet. Scarcely had they entered the citadel, with twelve or fifteen hundred of their followers, when they were all massacred,—not on the esplanade, as is generally imagined, but in the narrow passages, corridors, and inner courts. One man only, it is said, escaped by an act of extraordinary boldness: he leaped his horse down from the ramparts, and we were shown the spot where he fell in the street: the animal was killed, but the man was saved, if the popular story may be believed.

During the execution of this fearful mandate, Mehemet Ali was in such restless and anxious suspense (as he himself used to relate), that he contracted at that terrible moment a nervous tic, from which he suffered during the rest of his life, and perceptible to every one who conversed with him even for a few moments. From that day, however, he was master of Egypt, and set about the great work of regenerating the country, which his genius had conceived, and which he commenced so successfully at many points.

Adjoining this saloon, rendered memorable by such sanguinary horrors, we passed into the divan, where Mohammed Said formally announced to the Consuls-General of the various nations the firman he had

granted for cutting through the Isthmus of Suez, and which conferred the concession on his friend M. Ferdinand de Lesseps.

From the top of the citadel, the panorama of Cairo, seen under that glorious sky, has something of fairy-like beauty. At our feet lay stretched an immense city, the population of which amounts to more than 300,000 souls ; on the horizon, the Nile, which passes at Boulak, and the Pyramids of Ghizeh and Sakkarah. We could hardly take our eyes off the grand sight, so new to us Europeans.

Before quitting Cairo, we visited the Grotto of the Virgin, in which the Holy Family is said to have reposed when they fled from the persecution of Herod. The spot to which we were conducted is not worthy to recall such a remembrance, although it is greatly venerated. The Catholic countries should undertake, at their common cost, to restore this poor and obscure church, if they put any faith in the authenticity of the tradition. Not far from hence, on the Nile, above the Mekias, or Nilometer, the spot was shown to us where the cradle of Moses stopped, when exposed on the river. Thus the two religions, in their early and humble infancy, may be said to touch.

At 9 o'clock in the morning of November 23rd, the Commission was received by his Highness the Viceroy, at the fortified camp of the Barrage, called

from his name Saidieh. His Highness reviewed the troops drawn up for our arrival. Seven or eight thousand men,—infantry, cavalry, and artillery,—executed some grand manœuvres, under the personal command of the Pasha, who is well conversant with and takes pleasure in this science.

The appearance of the troops, beside being most picturesque, is perfectly military. This is not surprising when we look at the population of the Fellahs, slender, vigorous, and indefatigable on the march, easily keeping up with our horses at a gallop, and marching, or rather running, eight or ten leagues a day, without resting or taking scarcely any food; and continuing this day after day. The squadrons and battalions defiled with remarkable regularity, and handled their arms with a precision which would not discredit our best infantry. We took off our hats before the flag, which was that which floated at Silistria and Arab-Tabia.

Our reception by his Highness the Viceroy was quite in accordance with the royal munificence with which he has treated us since landing on the shores of Egypt. It was most cordial, yet perfectly simple, and held in a tent. Mohammed Said speaks French readily, and our interview had therefore none of the tedium which such official meetings usually have, when the communication takes place through the medium of a drago-

man, in the imperfect interchange of broken and often commonplace remarks.

Conversing thus familiarly with his Highness the Viceroy, and his ministers, Edhem Pasha and Zulfikar Pasha, we might have imagined ourselves in a circle of the best society of Paris. The Viceroy has wit, good sense, easy manners, and a frank disposition. Such was the impression I received from our interview, which lasted four hours. You know me too well to suspect me of flattery or fiction, if I remark the tact as well as politeness shown in many felicitous expressions which fell from his Highness: I mention only one. On our hesitating to cover our heads, notwithstanding his request that we would do so, M. de Lesseps said, "Your Highness treats these gentlemen like crowned heads." "These gentlemen," replied Said, "are indeed the crowned heads of science."

At breakfast, which we partook in the Turkish fashion, with our fingers, we were much amused with our unavoidable awkwardness: the dishes were as good, as the manner of eating them was strange. This however is not the Egyptian, but purely Turkish fashion: Mohammed Said usually eats in the European manner. He wished, for his own amusement as well as ours, to surprise us in this way, but, though we laughed at it, I would advise no one to relinquish the knife and fork.

His Highness the Viceroy requested the Commissioners to direct their attention, in addition to the subject of the opening the Isthmus of Suez, to various projects which he meditates for the interior of the country. He first called their notice to the Barrage of the Nile, in order to ascertain in what manner it can be completed most advantageously by canals, to be connected down the river at the spot called The Cow's Belly, where the two principal branches of the Nile separate; also what system of hydraulic works the Commissioners would approve or propose.

The Barrage of the Nile, which does the greatest honour to the skill of M. Mougel Bey, is nearly finished, and might be brought into operation in a few months. This colossal work was accomplished in seven or eight years, amidst difficulties of every kind that could attend so vast an enterprise, and in a country so far behind us in the appliances of skill and industry. It is 6500 feet long, on the two branches of the Nile, and has in all 134 arches (62 and 72). It will serve as a bridge as well as a dam, and will retain the water fourteen feet nine inches above its former lowest level.

In the second place, his Highness requested the Commissioners to ascend the river as high as the first Cataract, to indicate the most convenient point for the establishment of a second Barrage, not less important

and useful than the first. During the time the Commissioners are gone to Upper Egypt, the borings are going on, and will be completed in the Isthmus of Suez, along the entire line of the canal, the course of which is already in part marked out; they are going on simultaneously also in the Bay of Pelusium.

In availing himself thus of the presence of these distinguished European engineers, the Viceroy exhibits the wisdom of an able ruler, who takes advantage of every opportunity to benefit his people. In a future letter I shall have occasion to speak of the administration of the country.

## LETTER II.

## ANCIENT ALEXANDRIA.

Cairo, Nov. 26th, 1855.

IN my last letter I said but little of Alexandria. I shall therefore, by way of atonement, make it the principal subject of this.

Alexandria is at the present day a commercial city, the port of Egypt, and the channel of communication between Europe and part of Africa, as well as Asia : it occupies an advantageous site in the Mediterranean, and appears to be destined to play a great part, when civilization shall be more advanced and settled in these countries. These considerations naturally excite our interest, at the same time that they are light in the balance of contemporaneous events. It is only in viewing the present state of Alexandria that I have been led to pass it with so slight a notice. If we revert to its past history, and to the times of its true



grandeur, such an estimate of its importance would be unjust. The Alexandria of the Ptolemies merits the attention and gratitude of all who are interested in the progress of the human mind,—the progress of science, letters, and philosophy. Of all the cities of antiquity, once vast and splendid, now in ruins or completely altered, Alexandria is one whose destiny presents the most instructive, though not the most consoling, spectacle,—an epitome of the fate of the finest and noblest works of man in the course of a few centuries.

Alexandria was founded by the hero whose name the city bears, B.C. 332, and has therefore now existed nearly twenty-two centuries. It has undergone such vicissitudes and changes,—passing from the Egyptians to the Greeks, from the Greeks to the Romans, from the Romans to the Arabs, from the Arabs to the Turks, from the Turks to the French, from the French to the English, and lastly back to the Egyptians, who began to re-appear on the scene about forty years ago,—that its identity is scarcely to be recognized.

Of the Greek and Roman city, which retained its beauty down to the time of Amrou, in the seventh century (A.D. 638), no vestige remains, notwithstanding its immense extent; and in the natural course of events, the Arabian city will ere long in like manner disappear, and be replaced by the European and

Christian city, which is daily increasing, and will eventually absorb all the rest. Alexandria has been in turn idolatrous, under the Pharaohs, when it was only a straggling town on the sea-coast, without commerce and insignificant;—pagan, under the Ptolemies, when it was in all its glory, and under the Roman Emperors;—Christian, when Constantine inaugurated the new religion on the throne of the Cæsars;—Musliman, when Omar conquered it by his general;—and at the present day becoming once more Christian, under the influence of Europe, until civilization shall ultimately take root in the soil and establish her triumph.

Vicissitudes such as these, successive alternations of glory and disaster, of grandeur and abasement, fill the mind with reflection, and teach us, in contemplating these changes of destiny, to trace more clearly the ways of Providence.

Alexander was scarcely twenty-four years of age, when, between the battles of the Issus and of Arbela, after destroying Tyre, he made an expedition into Egypt, and, imposing upon the credulity of the people, claimed to be recognized as the son of Jupiter Ammon, and founded there the city throughout all ages destined to retain his name, as the noblest and most useful of his conquests. He only remained one year in Egypt, but in this short space of time he witnessed the rise of the new city.

Alexander himself indicated its site. Returning from Memphis, the sacred capital of Egypt under the Pharaohs, he descended the Nile by the Canopic branch; and following the coast proceeded to Libya, to consult the Oracle hidden in the depths of those deserts; when, at one part, not far distant from Canopus, he was struck with the advantageous character of the shore: an island lay at a short distance from land, extending east and west, with promontories advancing into the sea, capable of forming two magnificent harbours. The sagacity of his genius was not deceived, and he immediately gave orders that the site should be marked out, and a city built upon it. The execution of this task he entrusted to Dinocrates, a skilful and enterprising architect, who had recently proposed to carve Mount Athos into a statue, and to place in one of its hands a city of ten thousand inhabitants, and in the other a vast river. Alexander did not exact from him a task so difficult and gigantic; but he required the promptest execution of his own project, and, without doubt, the hero, returning from the Libyan deserts, already paced the streets of the rising city, and consecrated some of its temples.

There was at that time on this coast only one poor village, called Rhakotis by the Greeks, and doubtless also by the natives. In this place was stationed a small garrison, which the Pharaohs established there,

to watch foreign vessels driven by stress of weather into these parts, or seeking to carry on some traffic there. The Pharaohs, we know, had for ages restricted their navigation to the Red Sea. The Mediterranean inspired the Egyptians with dread; and the peoples who frequented it, notwithstanding the intercourse which had formerly existed between them, were objects of fear. They had been prohibited access to any part of the coast, and were only able to carry on traffic at the Canopic mouth, and at a factory which the Milesians were permitted to establish at Naucratis. It was not until the end of the sixth century B.C., under Apries, that the Pharaohs attempted to have a fleet in the Mediterranean, and the conquest of Cyprus shows that their naval power was not even then inconsiderable. The invasion of Cambyses arrested its progress, and the poor creek of Rhakotis remained still for two centuries unknown to the world, except to an occasional sailor whom stress of weather compelled to seek shelter there.

Alexander, hurried away by his great designs, did not remain long in Egypt; but his city, which was without doubt enlarged during his reign, short as that was, became soon after him the seat of an empire. One of his generals, Ptolemy, surnamed Soter (saviour), for having saved Alexander's life in Asia, had this portion for his heritage: Egypt fell to his lot, and

Alexandria became the capital of Egypt, with which it communicated by the beautiful Lake Mareotis, and by vast canals, at the same time that it was the principal port.

The genius of the Greeks was indeed marvellous. Scarcely was Ptolemy Soter, or Lagus, in possession of his kingdom, than, though engaged in incessant and inevitable wars, as well as distant conquests, he founded in this newly-risen city, on a barbarian soil, scientific and literary institutions, which no nation, even among the most opulent and enlightened, has surpassed. Following the counsel of Demetrius of Phalera, an orator and statesman banished from Athens, he founded libraries and museums, which he maintained at the expense of his treasury, securing also their future prosperity by rich endowments.

Such a project appears in our days natural enough; but three centuries before the Christian era, it was an idea suggested by genius, and as original as it was fruitful of results; the prince who conceived it could not have been a man of ordinary capacity. Lagus commenced the famous Library, and before his death (B.C. 285), after a reign of more than twenty years, he had already enriched it with 200,000 volumes. His successors must have increased it threefold. At that remote period such liberality was unexampled among sovereigns, unless the Pharaohs and the kings of Perga-

mus, who were also celebrated for their love of letters, imitated the kings of Egypt, disputing with them the bibliographical rarities of their age. Some individuals—Aristotle among others—formed libraries for their own use; but what were these in comparison with this magnificent institution, the cost of which a Government defrayed?

The most ancient and authentic account of the Museum we have is that given by Strabo, who went twice to Egypt, and describes it from personal inspection. This description, now nineteen centuries old, is concise; nevertheless it suffices to give an exact and very high idea of the great establishment of the Ptolemies in Strabo's time.\* It formed a part of the royal palaces, and had a promenade, galleries with seats, and an immense hall or refectory for the learned men who lived there in common. This institution possessed special revenues, administered by a priest who was nominated by the king; and from these revenues the professors received a regular salary. Not far from the Museum was the great Library, confided to their use and care. They formed a kind of council, which discussed the authenticity of works, and admitted or rejected them. It is undoubted that at that time the art of librarianship, with all its requisite qualities of erudition and exactness, was well understood. The

\* Strabo, lib. xvii. cap. 1.

books, or rather manuscripts, were very numerous; and without strict order, this vast collection, formed at such an enormous cost, might have been thrown into confusion and rendered useless.

The Library and Museum, in close connection, were situated in the quarter called the Bruchium, north of Alexandria, on the spot now occupied by the dwellings of the European Consuls. This led to the great disaster of the destruction of the Library: when Cæsar, having gone to Alexandria without sufficient forces, was obliged, in self-defence, to burn the Egyptian fleet, the fire communicated to the adjacent institutions, and the splendid Library was almost entirely consumed.

This was the disaster which deprived posterity of so many valuable documents and *chefs-d'œuvre*. The fire of Amrou, seven centuries later, if it really did take place, had not nearly so much to destroy; and, indeed, the tradition of it, which dates back, at furthest, to the twelfth century, though widely spread, is so questionable that it may be regarded as fabulous.

The calamity, however, which befell the Grand Library acted as a warning to the Egyptian Government. It appears certain that, in place of one collection, they resolved to form two. The Grand Library was restored in the best manner possible, and a second was founded in the Temple of Serapis, perhaps the

largest edifice in the city, near the spot where Pompey's Pillar, erected under Diocletian, now stands. This second Library, which was doubtless smaller than the first, bore the name of the "Daughter," and the original one, which served as its model, that of the "Mother."

The fate of the new Library was nearly as disastrous as that of the former one. In 391, an edict of Theodosius, which was rigorously executed, decreed the destruction of the Serapeum, and the Library it contained was dispersed. Under the influence of the new religion, which daily grew more powerful and intolerant, the re-construction of such an institution, the formation of which in pagan times had occupied four centuries, was very difficult.

Some idea may be formed of the nature of the struggles between the two religions, by recalling the murder of the beautiful Hypatia, daughter of Theon the mathematician, who was massacred in a popular commotion which St. Cyril excited in person. We may easily conceive that few pagan books remained to be destroyed, when Amrou, entering Alexandria after its capture, is said to have appealed to the fierce Omar, for orders respecting the Libraries, which conquest had thrown into his hands.

The organization of the Museum is not correctly known; in what manner its members were recruited,



whether by the prince's choice or by election, what duties the professors had to fulfil, in return for the munificent hospitality they received, and what branches of instruction they were appointed to give. The fact, however, most interesting to posterity, and which is known with certainty, is that here for many centuries was the great home and centre of science. After Athens had lost her genius with her liberty, and before Rome could be included in the circle of intellectual progress, Alexandria, under the Ptolemies, was for more than four centuries the glorious capital of science in all its branches.

History records abundant instances of this fact, from which I shall only cite the most illustrious. First, Euclid, the famous geometrician, whose works are still a recognized authority in our schools, and till within a century were their only manual,—Theocritus, the idyllic poet,—Aratus, the astronomical poet,—Callimachus, the author of the Hymns,—Apollonius of Rhodes, author of the poem of the “Argonauts,” and one of the directors of the Library of the Bruchium,—Manetho, the historian,—Erasistratus and Herophilus, physicians. To these we may add the names of the celebrated critics and editors of Homer, Zoilus, Zenodotus, and Aristarchus. After the Christian era, Ænesidemus the sceptic, and Sextus,—Lucian, who has been called the Voltaire of antiquity,—Athe-

næus, the author of the “Deipnosophist,”—Claudius Ptolemy, whose astronomical system was only superseded by that of Copernicus,—and Diophantes, the mathematician, who has been regarded as the father of algebra. To these we may add all the members of the great philosophical school of Alexandria,—Ammونیus Sakkas, Plotinus, and in the fifth century Proclus, with all their disciples, Porphyry, Iamblichus, etc., the last luminaries of the pagan philosophy, which had now exchanged learning and reason for mysticism.

Then, by the side of Paganism, and thanks to its tolerance, is the entire Christian school, founded, if we believe St. Jerome, by St. Mark himself, and rendered illustrious at a later period, by Athenagoras the apologist, St. Pantæus the Stoic, Clement of Alexandria, the reconciler of Plato and Christianity, Origen, and many others. To these names must be added those of the Jewish schools, in which shone Philo, thirty years before the Christian era, and the Gnostic schools, of which too little is known.

Thus we see that Alexandria, which had been so long, and still is, one of the principal ports of the Mediterranean, was, during upwards of eight centuries, the centre of an intellectual life and movement, of which the modern world has reaped the fruits. I know no commercial city which can boast a similar glory.

This is perhaps not surprising, when we remember

that it was founded by the disciple of Aristotle, the ardent admirer of Homer and Pindar ; nevertheless we must regard with interest this secret and powerful influence ; and if Alexandria is destined, in the present age, to be the point at which the regeneration of Egypt shall begin, it will seem but the renewal of a long-interrupted tradition. Whatever may have been the state of science among the priests in the times of the Pharaohs,—and it is attested by the ruins which cover the country,—it is not such as our age is destined to develope, and Greek Alexandria has rendered very different services to the world from those of sacerdotal Memphis.

Commercial cities have, in general, accumulated only material wealth. Marseille, which was founded also by the Greeks, has preserved nothing of their genius ; her prosperity, which has steadily increased for twenty-five centuries, has never fostered any taste for letters, science, or art. Venice, and still more Florence, did much for both ; but their career, noble as it is, cannot be compared with that of Alexandria.

The aspect of the city of Alexandria,—at once a warlike capital, a naval arsenal, and an important commercial port,—appears to have been superb. The Isle of Pharos, on which Ptolemy Soter erected a lighthouse,—the first in point of date, and one of the wonders of the world until the thirteenth century,—was con-

nected with the city by a wide causeway, called the Heptastadium, or causeway of the seven stadia (about three-quarters of a mile). This road, serving also as an aqueduct, had two openings, through which vessels could pass, to the Great Port on the north-east, and the Port of Eunostus on the south-west. This causeway has long been choked up, and the Isle of Pharos has formed part of Alexandria, without their ancient separation being at all traceable; and consequently all communication between the Great and the Small Port has long ago been stopped. It is a remarkable fact, that the Great Port, which was especially used by the ancients, and in which all their arsenals and other public establishments were constructed, together with the palaces of their kings, is now completely abandoned: the port of Alexandria at the present day is the Small Port, called by the ancients Eunostus, a name of favourable augury.

This change, which is complete, and to all appearance irrevocable, is undoubtedly caused by the Old Port having become in the course of time less and less serviceable. It is possible that the construction of the Heptastadium may have in some degree caused this change. This pier, by opposing the natural movement of the water and sands, may have perhaps caused accumulations of alluvium, which render the anchorage less deep and safe. At the present day the Old Port

is wholly useless, and the engineers who propose that the Canal of Suez should terminate at this spot cannot have examined it.

It is certain, that the present Port of Alexandria was scarcely at all used by the ancients; and that the New Port, now almost abandoned, was that in which Cæsar fought, and which long remained the only one for commercial and warlike purposes.

The ancient city of Alexandria was divided into five districts, of which history has only preserved the names of two,—the Bruchium, which was especially Greek, Macedonian, or Roman; and the Rhakotis, which was almost exclusively Egyptian. The city, not less than four leagues in circuit, was intersected at right angles by two large streets, running east and west, north and south, the point of intersection being the great square. At the west end was the Necropolis Gate; at the east, the Canopic Gate; on the north, close to the sea-shore, the Gate of the Moon; and on the south, not far from Lake Mareotis, the Gate of the Sun. These streets were adorned with immense colonnades, which Strabo saw when he visited Alexandria (B.C. 24) with Ælius Gallus the Roman Governor;—which Achilles Tatius saw, in the third century, and which were admired by Abdallatif the Arabian historian of Egypt, and by the Jew Benjamin of Tudela, in the latter part of the twelfth century.

In addition to its colonnades, its Museum, Library, palaces, the Serapeum, and Heptastadium, the city contained a great many monuments, vying with each other in beauty. First there was the Sema, or 'Tomb,' where the body of Alexander, which Ptolemy Soter brought from Asia, was buried. Strabo saw it three centuries later, but the embalmed body of the hero had been stript of the massive golden coffin in which it was originally laid: one of the Ptolemies, sur-named Kokkes, tempted by sacrilegious cupidity, substituted for the golden coffin one of glass. The monument, however, consecrated by the memory of Alexander, and the place of sepulture for his successors on the throne of Egypt, remained an object of undiminished veneration. The Emperors took pride in enriching it with costly offerings; Augustus, Septimius Severus, even Caracalla, rivalled one another in lavishing a profusion of wealth upon it.

Next to the Sema, which was a kind of St. Denis, or Westminster Abbey, of the Ptolemies, we may mention the Homereion, or temple of Homer; the Cæsareion, or temple of Cæsar, erected by Anthony and Cleopatra, to the memory of the assassinated Dictator; the Sebasteion, a temple in honour of Augustus, which contained lecture-halls for the learned men, and is mentioned by Philo as one of the most beautiful monuments in existence; the Claudium, a

museum founded by Claudius, who, in his ridiculous vanity, imposed upon the literary men whom he maintained there, the task of reading once a year, in public assembly, his works on Etruria and Carthage; the Panium, which commanded a view of the whole city; gymnasia, public gardens, parks, buildings of every description, for the administrative, judiciary, and sanitary wants of this fine city, which was in extent five or six times as large as the modern city, and for a long period contained above 300,000 inhabitants. It had immense subterranean canals, reservoirs, sewers, etc. Next to Rome, there was no city in the world of greater grandeur or importance. •

Alexandria has been repeatedly devastated by civil war, religious commotions, sieges, fires, and disasters of every kind; it suffered fearful ravages under Ptolemy VII. and Ptolemy X., Cæsar, Caracalla, Aurelian, Diocletian, Julian, and Theodosius. The most fatal blow, however, appears to have been inflicted by the Mussulman conquest, and at a subsequent period the prolonged anarchy of the Mamelukes.

The city was at the height of its prosperity in the time of Cæsar, as we learn from Strabo. Down to the twelfth century it was still populous and wealthy, but after that period its decline commenced, and steadily continued; and this vast city became gradually reduced in its extent and population, which at last

amounted only to six or seven thousand inhabitants, when the genius of Mehemet Ali contemplated its rescue from destruction. At the present day it has a population of at least 100,000 souls.

Such is a brief outline of the history of Alexandria, past and present,—rendered illustrious by a glory equally marvellous and deserved, and the memory of which will last as long as the human mind itself,—followed by a decline and decay, which, after a long lethargy, is again succeeded by the dawn of a brighter future. Alexandria has no longer any pretension to instruct the world, especially not the European world; but it can still instruct and regenerate Egypt, and this, although a restricted, is yet a noble task. The country of the Pharaohs well deserves to be restored to civilization, and we may be assured that a people, whose intelligence in former times is still manifested in the wonderful monuments which they have bequeathed to posterity, will yet be found able and ready to respond to the appeal that may be addressed to them.

I have confidence in the destinies of Egypt. I believe that it will become the natural and sure channel through which European civilization will pass into Asia, especially if our enterprise should succeed. Resorted to by the commerce, industry, capital, and inhabitants of Christendom, Alexandria may resume her



ancient and holy mission, which has in all ages been to unite the most diverse forms of religion, the most opposite faiths,—Greece with Egypt, Paganism with Christianity, and at the present day Christian enlightenment with Mohammedan ignorance. Under this new state of things I hope that Alexandria will succeed in attaining, if not the opulence she once possessed, at least greater repose and increased dignity.

It is vain, however, to seek in the present city vestiges of the ancient one: in fact the very site is not the same. If my view is correct, the Alexandria of our time scarcely extends beyond the Heptastade of the city of the Ptolemies: the site is therefore much smaller than the original one, and here is one source of great difficulty if our researches are limited to the present circuit. They must be extended considerably eastward, both along the coast, and on the route to Canopus and Syria,—that is to say, of Rosetta and Damietta; and likewise to the south and west, nearly as far as Lake Mareotis, the present Mariou.

This lake, which once supplied food and excellent water to the city, is now greatly changed; the English, in 1801, in self-defence, let the waters of the sea into it. To attempt to drain this salt-water, and restore the lake to its former utility, would be a task of immense labour and expense; such enterprises as this the Egyptian Government may undertake at a

future time, but for the present, the Mahmoudieh may suffice for the supply of the city with water, and its communication with the rest of Egypt; not to mention the railway which runs along the side of this canal, turns in the direction of the Nile, crosses the river, and terminates at Cairo, whence it will soon be carried on to Suez.

What a revolution—a railroad and locomotives traversing the ground which Alexander, Cæsar, and Amrou trod! And then comes the reflection, that, of all the numerous monuments which made Alexandria, even under the Lower Empire, the second city in the world, there only remain Pompey's Pillar, an obelisk brought by an unknown Emperor from Heliopolis, as obelisks have been brought to Rome and Paris, and some catacombs in the quarter called, as if ironically, the Baths of Cleopatra.

The few remains of the past, which escaped the negligence and fanaticism of the Arabs, are daily disappearing, as the erection of new buildings is required. Scarcely fifteen years ago, travellers noticed columns, the remains of the ancient high-streets, which traversed the city from north to south: now, these may be sought in vain; the only vestiges are of buildings buried in the earth, which the erection of new ones brings to light. In the great Work on Egypt, the chief glory resulting from our expedition

of 1798, the traces of many ruins were marked down which are no longer to be seen ; they have disappeared for ever. On the seacoast, to the north-east and east, are found considerable remains at intervals, under the surface of the water, which protects and conceals them, except to a practised eye. But all this amounts to nothing, and the ancient Alexandria may be considered as utterly destroyed. Excavations, conducted with skill and intelligence, would probably lead to the discovery of many valuable remains: the hills—almost mountains—of debris, on the east and south of the city, undoubtedly contain treasures ; but these are daily disappearing, from a variety of accidents, and there will soon be nothing left.

Whenever any new work of importance is undertaken here, fragments are discovered. Thus, some years ago, an Englishman, Mr. Harris, found, not far from Cleopatra's Needle, the colossal foot of a Grecian statue in white marble, which he presented to the British Museum ; it seems to have belonged to a statue of Trajan, whom the Dacian prisoners of war worshipped. Other researches would probably be attended with similar success ; and in my first Letter I have shown how well the labour of disinterring the palace of Ramlé has been recompensed. But where shall we look, in a city interested only in commercial affairs, for any one to undertake these works ? Or

can a Government, which has so much to do, expend its revenues on antiquarian researches?

These are some of the reflections which passed through my mind in travelling on the railroad, and afterwards proceeding up the Nile. This picture of the destruction of a city, once so great and flourishing, is assuredly not very attractive, but is a true one; and Alexandria, all animated as it appears, exhibits a great example of the nothingness of human things. The monuments we raise perish; a little less perishable, is the fame which transmits their deathless memory to posterity. The glory of Alexander has lost nothing of its effulgence, whilst the city, which he entrusted to Dinocrates, is dead; nor can any power in the world, not even the greatest erudition and sagacity, restore to it a shadow of life.

## LETTER III.

## ADMINISTRATION OF EGYPT.

Siout, Upper Egypt, Nov. 28th, 1855.

IN ascending the Nile, I everywhere meet with the contrasts which struck me on first landing at Alexandria,—European civilization grafted on Mussulman ignorance. In the streets of Cairo, at the foot of the Pyramid of Cheops, in almost every village, the people address you in English. On the shores of the river, from station to station, are seen telegraphs, and frequently even the tall chimneys of steam-works, looking at a distance like obelisks, which, in the hands of Ibrahim's sons or of Europeans, are manufactories of sugar, or serve to raise the waters of the Nile for the purposes of irrigation, when the river begins to recede.

Strange indeed are such spectacles to the traveller in the land of the Pharaohs! and yet it is by the ad-

option of European arts, industry, and, as far as practicable, habits of life, that Islamism can alone be regenerated or rescued from extinction.

In my opinion, justice has not been rendered to the Government of Egypt, which has at least the glory of having taken the initiative in reform ; for the last forty years no just and uniform sympathy has been shown to its efforts and intentions, which deserve great commendation. I am far from attempting to justify blindly all the measures it has employed ; but when I regard all the difficulties it has had to overcome, and which it has attacked with such resolution, and in some respects with so much success, the uppermost sentiment in my mind is one of sympathy and great indulgence. If we are naturally disposed to reprehend administrative measures which do not accord with our usages, we must remember that we are no longer passing judgment on a Christian and civilized country. Indeed the recollection of the state in which a great portion of Europe still is, disarms our severity against a Government which has so much of importance to occupy its care and attention, and has effected so much during the last half-century, notwithstanding the errors it has committed, inevitable at the outset of a new career.

It is evident that, with regard to Egypt, there is no question of any great and radical change analo-

gous to that which took place in France in 1789. In this country the people are not taken into account, and have never had the smallest influence over its destinies. From the times of the Pharaohs, to the present day, the Government has had charge and authority over everything; and, since Mehemet Ali, it has attempted to change entirely the forms of civilization, without even using the lever of religion. Gigantic as was the task of introducing such changes among a people only half civilized, by a mere appeal to their reason and interest, without addressing those all-powerful passions and feelings which transfigure the moral aspect of nations, it was still a noble task; even when attempted by violent and semi-barbarous means, and in spite of all surrounding perils.

This is, in my opinion, the view which we, as Europeans, must take in setting foot on the soil of Egypt, and which the people of that country already feel confusedly. I have everywhere noticed something of the filial veneration for the memory of Mehemet Ali which the Russians preserve for that of Peter the First, and the Prussians for Frederic the Great. This redoubtable Pasha was equally entitled to the appellation of Father of his Country, had Egypt been able to understand the inestimable value of that grand expression, which indeed so few Christian nations still understand. It may be presumed that, had it not been for our exp-

dition of 1798, the germ of reform would not have sprung spontaneously from the soil of Egypt; nevertheless, is it not a marvellous fact, that a former Janissary, a man without education, a man of war and bloodshed, should have fostered and matured this germ?

It is impossible to form an idea of the frightful anarchy into which the government of the Mamelukes had thrown Egypt. We know what the feudal system was in Europe; but what must have been the domination of fifty local tyrants, leagued together to oppress remorselessly their docile subjects! The tyranny of a single man, however severe, was infinitely preferable.

Mehemet has been greatly reproached for the monopoly he established, which made him master of all the products of the country, on which he imposed an arbitrary tariff. The Egyptian Government, however, has become so well aware of this error, that it has relinquished the monopoly, and substituted a more regular and equitable system of taxation. Mehemet had been drawn into this measure, of which there is no other example than that of the Pharaohs,\* by his victory over the Mamelukes, as well as by the Mussulman law, which does not recognize the property of individuals, but, constituting the State the

\* Genesis xlvii. 19, 20.



sole proprietor of the soil, confers on it the right of using it as it deems good.

Mehemet Ali may be said to have inherited the whole of Egypt, with slight exceptions; and he got possession of the rest by indemnifying the few proprietors who could prove a title to their lands. These were principally the Mosques, which had at an early period acquired, and still held, property that had been bestowed as religious offerings under the name of *wakfs*. Never had so grand a revolution been effected in the property of any country since the time of the Constituent Assembly, which, on the night of the 4th of August, abolished all feudal property. The Pasha's monopoly was a grave error in political economy and administration; but it was not a social crime in Egypt, as it would be with us, if, in any ill-omened day, monstrous theories ever gave it prevalence.

Abbas Pasha, who succeeded his grandfather in 1849, as the eldest of the family, abolished the monopoly, and instituted the tithe system, which was a little less bad. But the payment of the taxes in kind became the source of innumerable vexatious abuses. Abbas Pasha, although mild in his conduct to the people (we must do him this justice), made himself execrated and despised by his excessive cruelty to the great, his abominable licentiousness, his mad expenditure, the unbounded terror he inspired in all who

approached him, and his implacable hatred of civilization. It is probable that he paid the forfeit of crimes, which nothing could excuse, by a violent death. The exercise of his power had been so odious that, as the heat was excessive at the time he died, the Fellahs affirmed that the gates of hell had opened to receive his soul.

Mohammed Said, on succeeding Abbas,—who was his nephew, although older than himself—hastened to revert to the true principles of government. His intelligence, quickened by a European education, and his natural goodness, rendered him as much averse from the measures of his father, as from the conduct of his nephew. In lieu of the monopoly and the tithe, he decreed the present system of taxation; and, in order to prevent any complaint, he, in the first instance, subjected all his own personal property and that of his family to the new impost. He did even more, and, to exhibit a pattern of justice, he ordered, every year, that the tax should, as formerly, be strictly proportioned to the produce of the land. In many of the villages where we stopped, I met inspectors-general going their rounds, to relieve those lands from taxation which had not received the benefit of the periodical inundation. This is not exactly a novelty in Egypt; but there never was such care bestowed on the strict execution of the rule.

We, who have no such easy measure by which to regulate these affairs, cannot appear so equitable; we therefore try to adjust taxation to the presumed value of the land. But is it not an honourable act of disinterestedness on the part of the Egyptian Government, to make the river, as the natural source of prosperity, the arbiter between itself and the taxpayer? And does not this show a sense of justice which many Governments affecting higher civilization would probably not exhibit?

The great difficulty Mohammed Said will meet with in the execution of his generous designs, is that which his father encountered; Egypt has few men who can second his efforts. In the state of semi-organization in which the administration of the country will be for a long time to come, the first thing needful is to find men of honesty and intelligence. They are everywhere very rare, as we know to our cost, but here naturally more than usually so. The schools founded by Mehemet Ali, some of which were successful, although they have since become disorganized, and which Mohammed Said will doubtless restore upon a better footing, have as yet succeeded in forming only a small number of able men. Those who have been educated in Europe are far from sufficient for all the offices which demand their knowledge and zealous attention.

Said has been fortunate in collecting around him some persons who merit his full confidence,—some chosen by himself, the rest summoned long ago to Egypt by Mehemet Ali: Zulfikar Pasha, his Finance Minister, who was educated with him; Edhem Pasha, his present Minister of Foreign Affairs, whom he has recently appointed Governor of Cairo; Selim Pasha, the General-in-chief of his Cavalry, and the ablest of the pupils of Colonel Varin; Soliman Pasha, head of the Staff of the Army; Koenig Bey, whom I have before mentioned; Linant Bey and Mougel Bey, Chief Engineers of public works; Galice Bey, who constructed the fortifications of Alexandria; Mottet Bey, Captain of Engineers in the French army; together with many others, whom I have seen about his person.

Notwithstanding, however, all these efficient aids, the Viceroy's task is still immense and almost overwhelming. By the organization of absolute power, everything is referred to him, and he is of necessity occupied with a multitude of details, which engross all his time, and would weigh down natural powers less strong than his. The machinery of administration is very simple; but the hand of the master is incessantly required to direct and maintain its action. Under the governors of provinces, or Moudirs, who may be compared to our Prefets, are

the Nazirs, who resemble Sous-prefets ; and, under the Nazirs, are the governors of towns and heads of villages, the lowest instruments of the central power. Everything has yet to be created in the habits and methods of work ; and, unless the impulse is given by the Viceroy, there is great risk that it will not be given at all, or very badly.

In addition to all this, when we consider the traditional violence and rapacity of the Turkish administration, which was that of conquerors come to ransack the country, to carry off its spoils, and to quit it as speedily as possible, the perfect unscrupulousness of the chiefs, the almost universal improbity, united with the most refined cunning, it is easy to understand that the position of a prince, surrounded by these conditions, is far more arduous than enviable.

Mohammed Said has great activity of mind, and the business which he transacts in a single day might well startle the most hard-working man. His bodily activity is not less great, although he has suffered since the age of thirty-four from excessive corpulence, at which he frequently smiles. In the summer of 1845, with a heat of 36° of Réaumur, he led his troops into the Desert, in pursuit of the Bedouins who had revolted ; and he proved himself the most ardent and indefatigable of his soldiers.

From all that I have seen of the Viceroy, I am of

opinion that his administration is, and will be, a great benefit to Egypt, which, in his hands, cannot but make the most important progress. At this moment he has been beforehand with the International Commission in Upper Egypt, and he will perhaps anticipate us also in the Isthmus of Suez. His example has already made proselytes; he himself announced to us that his brother, Halim Pasha, a charming young man who was educated for twelve years at Paris, had just requested of him the government of the Soudan, which is the limit of Upper Egypt, on the confines of Sennaar. Mohammed Said acceded to the request; and this young man is a most valuable auxiliary in the administration of a country, where the representative of the Viceroy is almost independent, from the remoteness of the country, and the necessity of prompt decisions on an undetermined frontier, which is incessantly menaced. The man required for this post must be one in whom perfect confidence can be placed,—in fact, an *alter ego*. The Viceroy did not conceal from his younger brother the difficulties of his charge, which are increased by the unhealthiness of the climate. Halim Pasha persevered in his resolution, and, if he can continue to pursue it, excellent results may be anticipated from his capacity and talents.

The Soudan, inhabited by negroes, has but recently been subjugated. Mehemet Ali sent thither his son

Ismail, who, together with all his suite, was burnt in a village insurrection; the Defterdar, his son-in-law, reduced the country to obedience, and took terrible vengeance for the death of his brother-in-law Ismail.

The greatest danger that will, for a long time, menace the Egyptian Government will arise from its own good intentions. In a country where everything has to be created, it is absolutely necessary to commence many things at once, and it is difficult to finish them all, when they are great and important. It is well known amongst us, with all our superiority, how much time—I dare not say how much perseverance—it has required to finish works which were undertaken centuries ago, and some of which are only completed in our days, whilst others will perhaps never be concluded. In Egypt, which is perfectly new to civilization, it is not to be wondered at that this is the case. Our own faults may teach us to excuse those of peoples much less advanced, and moreover much less endowed by nature.

The population of the Arabs and the Fellahs (I leave out that of the Turks, which is scarcely perceptible and is opposed to all civilization, at least here), the Egyptian population is, generally, a fine race. In a physical point of view, they are in general well formed and proportioned, vigorous and very temperate. But the fruitful climate, which satisfies their limited

wants with hardly any labour, has enervated them almost as much as the traditional manners which they retain. The soil is so fertile, that it seldom requires the plough. When the Nile retires, the husbandman has only to sow the seed on the wet mud, and the crops are almost fabulous. In this favourable temperature, you can sleep upon the ground in the depth of winter quite as well as in summer, and people dispense with a shelter just as easily as they dispense with clothes.

The result of all these causes is an endemic idleness, not inconsistent with those wonderful monuments which have for ages been the glory of Egypt, and overpower us still with their imposing and incomparable masses, but which were erected by the people only under the incessant pressure of task-masters, equally haughty and implacable. The Fellah is at the present day precisely the same as he was four thousand years ago ; and the *shadowufs* (machines for drawing water, which are seen at every step on the banks of the river) are at this hour precisely the same as those, equally rude and clumsy, used in ancient times, and seen in the hieroglyphical paintings. Forty centuries ago this might have been an ingenious invention ; but it required improvement, and no progress whatever has been made.

This immutability, this indifference to improve-



ment, appears to be the general characteristic of the Fellah, who in other respects is far from deficient in intelligence. All the instruments he uses are well enough adapted to the purposes for which they are intended, but they have a primitive and rude appearance. Nature, it is clear, has in no way changed, and the Nile, regular as it is, has only had its shores raised by the successive accumulations of its fertilizing mud : it is less easy to conceive how man has remained equally unchanged as the material world around him. Yet nearly all the peoples of Asia, as well as the Fellahs and Arabs, furnish similar examples.

The Mohammedan—perhaps, I should add, endemic—fatalism was not adapted to ameliorate this lamentable disposition, implanted by race and nature. But this is not the greatest evil under which these people suffer, whose fate yet seems capable of being rendered less miserable. Their manners are corrupted to a degree perhaps irremediable, and to correct them would be a still greater miracle on the part of their governors than to inspire them with activity and industry. Mohammedanism is not alone in fault ; the Turkish Government inherited many ineradicable traditions from all the Governments which preceded it, going back even to the Pharaohs. But if, by the will of Providence, Egypt had been Christianized fifteen centuries ago, its condition would without doubt

be entirely different at the present day. Heaven has not vouchsafed to grant every blessing to this fertile land; and it might be said—if the thought is not sacrilegious—that material advantages have been bestowed in compensation for moral good, and that the Nile appears enough for the welfare of a people.

Such welfare however is very incomplete, as will be readily understood when the aspect of property and family life, the only real basis of society, is examined. I reserve these details for another Letter.

I have scarcely mentioned any member of the family of Mehemet Ali except Mohammed Said, but may say a word also of his probable successor, Achmet Pasha, one of Ibrahim's three sons. By the Hatti-Sherif of 1841, which settled the hereditary succession to power in Egypt on the descendants of Mehemet, it was decreed, in accordance with the usages of Turkey and the East, that the succession should always pass to the eldest member. Thus Abbas Pasha reigned before his uncle, being the elder of the two, and for this reason Achmet would succeed to Mohammed Said, in case of the latter's death. Achmet Pasha is considered the wealthiest man in Egypt: he was educated in France, where he resided fifteen years, and during all that time attended the courses of instruction in our schools—the *École Polytechnique* at the head. He speaks French very well, and there are few better-in-

formed agriculturists, even in Europe. His vast domains might serve as models, and he has employed his immense revenues solely in the most productive system of cultivation. Mohammed Said has distinguished him among his kinsmen ; and, notwithstanding some early differences, he has a peculiar esteem for Achmet's character. When he formed the intention of coming to Europe, he entrusted his seals of office to his cousin-german, Achmet Pasha,—the greatest mark of confidence he could repose in him. The two brothers of Achmet were likewise educated in France, and the family of Mehemet Ali is not likely to want distinguished representatives.

The future destiny of Egypt thus appears to be equally well assured as its present state ; and Mohamed Said will, in his successor, have no antagonist ready to destroy what he has raised. Far from it ; Achmet Pasha would regard it an honour to continue the good work commenced by others, to the great advantage of civilization and of his country.

## LETTER IV.

## PROPERTY. THE FAMILY.

Assouan, Upper Egypt, December 6th, 1855.

DURING our visit to the ruins of the Ramesseion, in the western plains of Thebes, two young children from eight to ten years of age, one of whom was quite naked, came running up to us, and showed us their little right arms, on which a cross was tatooed in blue. They gave us to understand that they were Christians; and, to convince us of this, they made the sign of the Cross, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Their faces were gentle and intelligent, and their physiognomy more refined than that of their companions. Their eyes beamed with a less wild expression, and showed more traces of humanity. Our conversation with these poor little creatures ended naturally with an alms, a bakshish, which they begged of us, whilst one of their companions, of the same age, stretched out his arm with

energy, and exclaimed, "Moslem!" to testify that he was a Mussulman, and as proud of it, as the two others were of being Christians.

This episode in our voyage, within a short distance from the grandest monuments of Egypt, touched us greatly; and I can truly say that the splendours of the architecture and tombs of the Pharaohs are far from having made so deep an impression upon us; though at every step what we see surpasses a thousand times all that our imagination had dreamt of; and our admiration, overpowered by the sight of these incomparable grandeurs of a mysterious Past, is continually reduced to silence, unable to find adequate expression. These two fragile creatures spoke to us more forcibly, in a few words, than the temples, palaces, pyramids, sarcophagi, with all their inscriptions and bas-reliefs. Man is far more interesting than his works, or even than those of nature, however splendid, amidst which he lives. Whilst visiting these ruins of antique grandeur, I confess they occupied my thoughts less than the Fellahs who accompanied us; and in regarding those enigmas of a history past beyond recall, the enigma which appeared to me still more curious, was that of the people who in former times raised these gigantic monuments, and who at the present day show them, in perfect ignorance, to the traveller from distant and civilized countries.

In travelling so rapidly through a country, we could not hope to acquire a thorough knowledge of it; but the objects we saw, if carefully studied, always afforded much instruction, which was rendered more complete by the various information gathered upon the spot. What strikes a stranger at first with a sad impression is, the miserable aspect of all these men, on the shores of the river, and of the women, half-veiled, seen here and there in the villages, and on the banks, where they come to wash their clothes with their feet. They are all in rags, yet very picturesque in their rags; and, excepting some functionaries and rich artisans, everybody is clothed in tatters, frequently draped like a Roman toga. The use of any covering for the feet is nearly unknown,—it is at most slippers, which do not cover the heels, yet seem not to incommode these indefatigable walkers.

The dwellings are no better than the clothing: the best, even at Cairo, appear ready to fall down; and in the villages and provincial towns they are all formed of clay, there being scarcely any wood for building. The sun-baked bricks, of which they are constructed, give them a dull and sombre appearance, which the sun cannot enliven in the narrow streets, built to exclude the heat: they usually consist merely of a ground-floor. Most of them, it is true, are only an occasional shelter, being inhabited

very little during the day, and barely used to sleep in at night. The people have no furniture of any value to lock up. The animals lie on the open ground, like their masters, in a climate where it never rains. The house serves as a shelter for the women only, and infants at the breast.

The beings who most excite my pity among this half-naked population are the little boys. They are wretched-looking beyond conception; and it is difficult to comprehend how these puny children grow into youths and men whose suppleness, vigour, and elegance are themes of admiration. To complete the misery of these poor creatures, a general prejudice restrains the mothers from ever washing them until the age of eight or nine years. From another superstitious prejudice, still more singular, they will not brush the flies from their faces, and all the children you meet are literally covered with their bites. At a distance their faces appear perfectly blackened by these insects, which must cause frightful irritation. We approached some of these children, and, thanks to the bakshish, we were permitted to drive away for an instant these insufferable plagues. Some of the mothers ventured even to imitate our example; but probably they took this trouble solely out of condescension to the strangers; an inexplicable superstition, even more than habitual neglect, would prevent their ever taking it voluntarily.

Nevertheless the entire population, despite their miserable condition, is not dirty : the climate itself seems to keep them clean. The streets in these villages are never filthy ; as there is no rain to wet them, and manure is useless in this country, where the Nile furnishes it annually, there are no offensive odours : even the innumerable pigeon-houses give no smell. The heat appears to purify everything.

In the shade the thermometer stands today (December 6th) at  $28^{\circ}$  Réaumur ; nevertheless the atmosphere is by no means stifling, owing to the freshness of the nights and mornings. Our sleep even is undisturbed, although we are within a few leagues of the Tropics. Nevertheless as we sit on the deck of our boat in the afternoon, scorched by the sun, we cannot but admire the Fellahs, who, under this burning and unclouded sky, continue the monotonous and fatiguing work of their shadoufs. They wear, it is true, only a pair of drawers round their loins, when not in a state of nature ; but a vigour more than common is required to bear this hard labour under such a temperature.

The former Egyptian Commission calculated that a shadouf, worked by a man of ordinary strength, could draw water direct from the river at the rate of eleven gallons a minute ; and, judging from what we have witnessed, this estimate is not exaggerated. This has



been, from time immemorial, the general method of irrigation ; and this, together with the sakiehs (wheels with earthen vessels, worked by animals), constitute the only artificial processes which the Fellah employs, like his forefathers, to aid the bountiful action of his river. The sakiehs scarcely ever work but at night. In the dark you hear the plaintive noise of their wheels, which are never greased ; this seems to prove that animals are less able to brave the effects of this burning climate than man. We are now in the depth of winter ; the waters are still high ; but, when the river shall have sunk twelve or fifteen feet lower, the irrigation will be far more difficult, in proportion as it will become more necessary.

Such are the evidences of incessant toil which I observe on the shores of the Nile ; and when we regard the innumerable earth-works, indispensable, not only for the great embankments from village to village, and for the canals, but for any cultivation of the fields, I must say that, in spite of appearances, and a natural inclination to indolence, the Fellah labours hard, working with the most imperfect instruments, which he usually makes himself. His plough is still constructed of two simple pieces of wood, seldom furnished with an iron share, such as it was doubtless in the semi-fabulous time of Menes or in the time of Abraham. He has neither shovel nor

wheelbarrow. The Fellahs very often remove the earth with their hands, or at most in koufs (baskets of palm-leaves), which they put on their shoulders. At Cæsar's Camp, which I have briefly mentioned in my first Letter, I have seen them in this manner at work on excavations which they had been ordered to make. Among three to four hundred men, there might have been perhaps three or four pickaxes, to break up the ground and uncover the remains of the palace; the rest filled the koufs with their hands, and ran without stopping, uttering cries of joy, to a distance of five hundred yards to empty them on the sea-shore. The breeze doubtless refreshed them; at any rate, they were all joyous and active, under the burning heat of the sun. I have observed nearly the same methods, and the same animation, in the timber-yards at the railway-stations, where these men are seen carrying with a light step enormous weights, bound with a simple cord, at the hotels, and on our excursions into the Desert or on the water.

From this I infer that the Fellahs have great power of resisting the enervating effects of their climate, and that they would be capable of great things if they were well trained and, under the guidance of an enlightened Government, could reform their institutions and habits. Their condition has never been so good as it is at present. Will it continue to improve? I hope

so ; but the answer lies in the inscrutable designs of Providence. The Egyptian Government, with all its zeal, undertakes a great task in attempting to change a state of things which the most complete political revolutions, and invasions of every kind, have failed to modify during forty centuries.

In short, the misfortune of the Fellahs, which they share with all the Mussulman nations, may be summed up in this fact,—they have neither property nor family, constituted on any solid or permanent basis. How can a society subsist without the organization of these elements, which appear to us absolutely indispensable? To this I can give no answer.

It is however wrong to confound all conglomerations of men under one common appellation ; and, on examining the question, I do not think it can be said that, in the restricted sense we attach to the term society, this country has ever possessed a real social organization ; notwithstanding the autocratic government of the Pharaohs, and the celebrated learning of the Egyptian priests. Human society passes through innumerable shades and gradations, from our social constitution, advanced in knowledge and civilization, down to the uncultivated rudiments of savage tribes. Egypt is far removed from these two extreme points, and tends to approximate more and more to us. The path she has to pursue, however, will be a very long

one, and her greatest merit is that of having been the first of Mussulman countries to enter upon it.

We have the clearest proof in Genesis, that the able policy of Joseph acquired for Pharaoh his master all the land of Egypt in two years. The first year he bought, for bread, all the cattle of the inhabitants, who were decimated by the famine; in the second year, he purchased themselves, with all their fields. The Bible says, in express terms, that the Egyptians went to Joseph and said, "We and our land will be servants unto Pharaoh; and give us seed, that we may live, and not die, that the land be not desolate."\* Thus the whole of the land belonged to Pharaoh, excepting the property of the priests, to whom a portion had been assigned, and who had no need to sell their land, as they doubtless lived on the rations which the king granted them.† Joseph gave the seed to the poor cultivators, on condition that they should give Pharaoh a fifth of their produce.‡

Thus, ever since the time of Joseph, (nearly two thousand years before the Christian era,) all claim on the part of individuals to territorial property has been abolished in Egypt. The State is the sole possessor of the soil, and the people have only the usufruct. But I shall not dwell upon this point, which has been ably demonstrated by M. de Sacy, in the *Mémoires*

\* Genesis xlvii. 19.

† *Ibid.*, ver. 22.

‡ *Ibid.*, ver. 26.

de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres, as well as by the Institut d'Égypte, in its researches into the ancient history of this country.

The testimony of Herodotus, four centuries and a half before the Christian era, and that of Diodorus Siculus in the time of Augustus, perfectly agree with the accounts given in the Bible. The Greek and Roman conquerors respected this state monopoly, which they had no interest in changing; and Islamism, which made the universal and absolute sovereignty of the Head of the Believers a religious dogma, would have established it, had it not previously existed from the most remote times. The Mamelukes had no desire to touch a principle by which they profited; and when the Sultan Selim, on his conquest of Egypt in 1517, left them the real masters of the country, it was understood that the successor of Mohammed, established at Constantinople, had the exclusive and inalienable property of the whole country, and that all those who were directly engaged in working the soil were merely his servants.

This organization of property, monstrous as it may appear to us, has received in Egypt the sanction of ages and the acquiescence of the people. Down to the present day, the state of things is nearly the same; only that, between the Viceroy and the Sultan, there is a kind of compromise. The Sultan is always looked

upon as the legal proprietor of the land, and hence the meaning of the tribute which is paid to him ; the Viceroy is the general and hereditary tenant, since the Hatti-sherif of 1841,—a result of the victory of Nezib. He delegates the power of cultivating the land to farmers ; and there is not a single real landed proprietor but himself, with the exception of the few persons to whom grants have been made at different periods by the Grand Signor, by special firmans, and some wakf estates which remain in the possession of the Mosques.

This is a very serious consideration, which should not be lost sight of, in estimating the conduct of the Egyptian Government in recent times. I repeat, its acts must not be weighed in the balance of our civilization : they must be tried by the precedents which are consecrated by all the usages and traditions of the country ; and, viewed in this light, they will appear entirely different from what superficial or partial observers have imagined.

It is easy to comprehend that, between the great and sole proprietor of such a vast possession, and the lowest links of the chain which reaches down to the poor Fellah, there is room for a multitude of middlemen, who live at the cost of the prince, as well as that of the tax-payer. It is well known how abuses swarmed under the feudal system, and what the vil-

leins, “ taillables et corvéables à merci,” paid, under various forms. This system, so justly detested amongst us, would have been here perhaps a great benefit, in comparison with the ruinous exactions of which the villages, and consequently the Fellahs, were the victims.

The study of Mehemet Ali, of Abbas Pasha, and especially of Mohammed Said, has been to lighten the burdens of the population, by equalizing them as far as possible, and suppressing much of the machinery of administration which was equally expensive and useless. Most of the villages were constantly in arrear in their accounts with the State. On coming to the throne, Mohammed Said, with a view to efface past vexations and complications, remitted all arrears due from them to the public Treasury. This very laudable generosity cost him an enormous sacrifice ; but it enables the poor agriculturists to breathe, and opens to the villages a system of order and economy before unknown.

Mohammed Said moreover granted the Fellahs permission to sell their products to whomsoever they choose, provided they have paid the impost,—a right which, as I have before said, they did not enjoy under Mehemet Ali. This is a measure well adapted to enable them gradually to become proprietors, and some are so already; it may be prejudicial to the Viceroy,

who has only the greater merit for having initiated it voluntarily, but it is very advantageous to the country.

The absence of private property is doubtless a very serious social evil, from which Egypt has suffered from time immemorial, and from which she will not be freed without great difficulty; there is however another, still more formidable, and probably quite as ancient. In Egypt the constitution of the family is almost as little known as the institution of property. Of this you may judge, by the following facts. To avoid error, I speak only of the present state of things. This is incontestable, since it exists constantly under the eyes of all who give attention to the subject. Doubt may be entertained of what passed under the Pharaohs or the Ptolemies, but the events of the present day are sufficiently well known; and the picture which I shall attempt to draw, however disheartening, is not the less exact and true.

In Egypt, marriage is by law simply a private transaction, regarded like all others, as sale and purchase. It must in justice be observed, that the Koran contains numerous and minute instructions, on this subject; but these, insufficient in themselves, have long been, and still are, very ill understood and ill applied.

The law fixes the term of majority, for both sexes, at fifteen years of age, which might at least protect



women. But even this regulation has not been adhered to ; it is sufficient that a girl of nine years, and a lad of twelve, declare on oath that they have attained the age of puberty, and the parents can marry them, minors as they are.

Custom, moreover, prescribes that marriages should take place, without the parties being known to one another ; and this usage, absurd as it is, has no exceptions but such as are inevitable. In the poor villages, or those with a scanty population, it is very difficult to prevent the future married couples seeing one another, as the children are brought up *pêle-mêle*, and the number of the marriageable is necessarily limited in both sexes ; they form in fact a kind of large family. In all other cases, however, the betrothed have never met. The father, or guardian, of the young man has an interview with the father or guardian of the young girl. Two stipulations only are made,—the amount of the dowry which the father-in-law gives to his future daughter, and the dowry which the husband secures to her in case she is repudiated. These matters being settled, they go before the Kadi, if there is one in the place ; or, in default of a magistrate, before some person who can write ; it is not essential that he should hold any legal office. The stipulations agreed upon are put in writing ; and witnesses are present, who are not, however, required

to be able to write,—a very rare accomplishment in these countries.

After eight days the married couple are united, with preliminaries which it is unnecessary to relate here. Some of them are innocent and puerile enough, as is shown, in the streets of Cairo, by the singular *cortéges*, in which the bride elect is conducted to the baths by her parents or friends, hermetically veiled from head to foot. The others have a very different character, which I cannot even allude to, although they must not be overlooked, since they are erroneously regarded as peculiar to this country. The reader whom such details may interest, I refer to the work of Dr. Clot Bey, under the chapter of ‘Marriage.’

Marriages, having received scarcely any consecration, may, by a necessary consequence, be dissolved as easily as they are contracted. Mutual consent is sufficient; and this consent is never withheld by the woman, who is terrified at the idea of the ill treatment which is the infallible consequence of a refusal. The separation then takes place in the same manner as the marriage. The dowry, which amounts to scarcely anything among the poorer classes, is easily paid. The husband promises to make a provision for the children, if there are any, and the parties may then marry again. This second marriage takes place with nearly the same formalities as the first; but the parties are generally

introduced to each other by female negotiators, and are married again without having seen one another. Naturally, in the case of a widow of one or more husbands, the marriage-portion and dowry are much less than in that of a young girl.

If the woman (to suppose an impossible case) refuses her consent to the divorce, the case is brought before the Kadi; and, to obtain a legal separation, it is only necessary to prove that she has one of the defects indicated by the law, which vitiates the contract. If the unhappy woman, for instance, is convicted of snoring, she is repudiated by the full authority of the law; and many faults equally grave are, as may be imagined, not very difficult of proof.

Divorces thus take place with deplorable facility, and it is not rare to meet with men who have been married thirty or forty times. The number of divorces is in proportion to the means of the husband.

In the higher classes, divorce is almost unknown; but, I regret to say, this is no indication of superior morality,—merely of greater wealth. In the first place, what is gained by divorce, when a man may legally have as many as four legitimate wives, without reckoning the harem, which is limited only by his means of maintaining it? If a man repudiate his wife, he may probably create formidable enemies in her family, ready to support her; he would likewise

have to pay her dowry, which might amount to a considerable sum. He therefore keeps her, in order to escape all this embarrassment; and she is consigned to the inviolable seclusion of her apartments, where she cannot easily trouble her husband, whom she, on her part, has always the hope of conciliating.

Thus the higher classes do not practise divorce, simply because they do not require it. It is not that they respect the marriage tie, but they have no motive to break it. The lower classes, who cannot afford to keep a seraglio, substitute change for numbers; in either class, it is to be feared, the depravity is nearly the same.

To these moral evils, sanctioned by usage, the law adds another. All the children, without distinction, are legitimate, whether the issue of a wife or of a concubine. They inherit the paternal property by the same title and in equal shares.

Nay, even in the cases of chance intercourse of the sexes (which, I must add, are less frequent here than with us), if the man only says to the woman at the moment, that he takes her as a legitimate wife, the offspring of this casual amour will be equally legitimate with the rest.

On landing yesterday on the island of Elephantina, we were surrounded by a crowd of children, offering us trifling objects for sale. Nearly all the boys were

naked, and the little girls had scarcely any covering. Some of the latter were carrying infants in their arms, or rather on their left hip. These were their own children, as we found on inquiry, and the majority of the mothers were certainly not twelve years old. We did not ask them their age, for no one knows his own age in a country totally without civil conditions; but from their figure, physiognomy, and gestures, we could guess very nearly; and, if mistaken, our mistake was very slight.

Nevertheless, these defects in the law, and this lax morality, have not led in fact to all the deplorable consequences which might have been feared. The Fellah has a strong natural attachment to his family, his wife and children. No body of troops are ever on the march, without the women following the army. As soon as drill is over, the soldiers are seen turning fathers again, and carrying their children in their arms. This is not a relaxation of discipline, but a necessity to which discipline must submit, whatever strictness it affects. When any great works are undertaken, every workman's wife has her tent beside that of her husband, in which her children lodge with her near their father.

During the construction of the arsenal of Alexandria, this state of things lasted the whole time. Each workman (and there were scarcely less than six thou-

sand) had a second cabin for his family, adjoining that in which he himself lodged. When our project of opening the Isthmus of Suez shall be carried into execution, the workmen will not come alone, but accompanied by their entire families, and care will be taken not to interfere with so laudable a custom. It would indeed be impossible to accomplish anything in this country in defiance of these strong domestic ties.

Thus the sentiment of nature is generally stronger than the law, and the habits and manners of the people are not so bad as might be expected. It is true that the force of circumstances aids greatly in bringing about this result. Although divorce is easily obtained, it costs some trouble; the husband must go before the Kadi to explain his motives,—sometimes to defend his cause: the settlement has also to be paid, small though it be, and something given to the children who will be made orphans. Partly from indolence, partly from right feeling, a man prefers to keep the companion he has, and avoid the hazards of change.

Such is generally the case with the lower classes, and the best homes are found among them, as I have been assured by persons thoroughly acquainted with the country from a residence of many years.

With a people so well disposed, and who manifest these germs of amelioration, the legislature ought

assuredly to have effected more than it has. An unforeseen career of progress may perhaps await this country at no distant period; meanwhile the law should more effectually aid a reform in the habits of the people; and the two great problems which it has still to solve are, the more regular organization of family life and that of property.

It is unnecessary to deduce from these facts the evident consequences they involve, and there yet remains more than one consideration to be mentioned. The first is, that the prevalent dissoluteness of manners is not the direct effect of Islamism, but already existed, together with the abolition of private property, when the Arabs conquered Egypt. It is clear from historical evidence, furnished by hieroglyphics, that polygamy was permitted under the Pharaohs, as at the present day: it is proved also that all children were legitimate, of whatever mother born\*; and, notwithstanding the wisdom which Greece gratuitously attributed to an age and country so remote, of which she knew little, I think we may justly assume that the moral condition of Egypt was even worse five thousand years ago than it is at the present day.

To what depths has the evil penetrated in such a period of time? and is what appears to us a degradation of human nature the normal condition of this

\* *Lettres de Champollion*, p. 279.

people? Christianity has not been able to establish itself in a country, whose faith and traditions were completely opposed to it. It is not Mohammedanism, however, as has been so often asserted, that has been the obstacle to improvement. Notwithstanding the holy fervour of the anchorites of the Thebais, it does not appear that their faith gained many proselytes. Omar, in establishing polygamy and the monopoly of the State, introduced nothing new. Egypt had possessed them many centuries before the introduction of Islamism, which, in more than one respect, was to that country, and indeed to the whole idolatrous East, a real benefit and a step of progress, by substituting a belief in the unity of God for the most frightful superstitions. It is dreadful to reflect, that even at the present day the most corrupt Fellahs are perhaps those who are Christians; while the Copts of Siout are the last and only people who still carry on the infamous traffic in eunuchs in Egypt.

In the material and moral condition of the Egyptian population which I have described, I think may be found the explanation of a fact which strikes the traveller everywhere in this country no less than the general misery: this is, the total and as it were childish absence of personal dignity. It cannot be said that the whole population are beggars, in our sense of the word, for they feel no kind of humilia-



tion in holding out their hand. Men, women, and children, all have but one word on their tongues,—“Bakshish, bakshish!” Swarms besiege you at every step, surround you with their toils, stop you with an urgency even more childish than annoying; and when the Chiaoux who walks before you attempts to deliver you from their importunities, by the use of the stick or kourbash (a kind of whip which he carries), they all take to their heels, but only to return in a few minutes, with the same impudence and the same good-nature. Even those who have been beaten seem to feel neither disgrace nor pain; they had only been less nimble than the rest, and, like flies brushed away, they return to the attack without fear or shame.

Nevertheless these are human beings not wanting in good qualities or intelligence; but they can never acquire a feeling of personal dignity, and, debased nearly to a level with the brutes, they suffer themselves with indifference to be treated like brutes. Our Chiaoux are very kind-hearted people, and we can feel for them only esteem and sympathy: they do not abuse the discretionary power placed in their hands. When their patience and forbearance are exhausted, they coolly have recourse to the infallible means at their disposal, just as if they had to deal with unruly cattle.

The question arises, how are such evils as I have

described to be cured? what hand can be found sufficiently firm and gentle, what institutions sufficiently powerful and efficacious, to heal these sores and infirmities, which still exist in all their force? It would be rash to attempt to point out any remedy, however earnestly one may wish to see one applied.

One thing appears to me quite evident, that reform, before it can affect the moral character of the people, must begin with the administration. The army, with the excessive augmentation of which the Viceroys of Egypt have been reproached, is one of the greatest and most efficient schools of civilization. It is desirable to add others to this; but the army, beside being here an indispensable instrument of internal peace, accustoms all who enter the ranks to discipline, order, cleanliness, and a feeling of honour. The necessity for the conscription, however severe at the present day, will gradually lead to the recognition of a civil *status*; and human beings will no longer be born and die like brutes, without leaving any record of their existence.

If, however, military discipline may here effect much good to the men, as it does even in our own country, what power will ever change or ameliorate the condition of the women, and rescue them from their inexpressible debasement, in which they lose even the most natural instinct of maternity? I turn in

despair from this picture, and can only say, that Christian civilization will be highly culpable, if it does not second, with all its power, the efforts made by a Mussulman country to emancipate itself from the moral evils which corrode it.

To regenerate the East is perhaps a more difficult task than to take Sebastopol; and to save a country from itself, is even more hazardous than to deliver it from its enemies. One of the surest means is to attract hither as much as possible the intercourse and the capital of civilized nations,—to foster and encourage enterprise, of a kind like that in which European science deems it now an honour to take part. The opening of the Isthmus of Suez, independent of its special importance, will be attended with the immense advantage, of creating an incessant current of civilization through Egypt. The perpetual and necessary contact with our arts and industry, with ourselves, and, we may add, with our moral superiority, will exercise the most favourable influence, and the only one that can have a decisive effect.

It cannot be denied that Egypt has, during the last twenty years, made the most satisfactory progress, and almost by her own unaided efforts. I may mention, as a proof of this, the perfect security which travellers in that country enjoy: they may wander to the confines of the Soudan, two hundred and fifty leagues

from Alexandria, safe from all danger ; and we yesterday parted, without the slightest apprehension, though not without regret, from two of our friends, who were starting to ascend to the second Cataract. Europe then would be wrong to despair of Egypt ; and, if she will but stretch out an aiding hand, she may assuredly foster a multitude of excellent germs in that country, which lie buried there, but which even such a long period of disaster has been unable to destroy.

## LETTER V.

## WOMEN.

Island of Philæ, December 7th, 1855.

It is unnecessary for me to offer any excuse for dwelling upon the momentous question of the condition of women. The importance of it in every social community, even in this country, induces me to resume the subject, to which I could only allude at the close of my last letter. I have spoken of their abject condition, nor, speaking generally, is this word too strong. I might even say, that it fails to convey all I would express, all that I witness, at least partially, during this rapid journey. I have not had any opportunity of seeing the interior of houses,—families, I can hardly consent to call them ; but I have observed many things on the surface of society here, which induce me to give some of my impressions, and to these I confine my remarks for the present.

It is hardly necessary to mention, that all the women here are veiled when they go abroad ; scarcely any but beggars, some old women of the lowest class, or prostitutes, venture to go unveiled. Even the poorest women are careful to conceal their features. The cloth which covers their head is attached by a small piece of brass to another cloth rising above the cheeks. The eyes alone are uncovered, being necessary to guide their steps, and the physiognomy remains almost wholly invisible.

If by chance any woman among the common people has omitted the precaution of veiling herself thus from the public eye, she takes a corner of her neckerchief when any one passes, and draws it quickly before her face, where she holds it as long as the stranger is within sight.

Among the women of higher rank, this precaution is observed still more strictly. They are completely enveloped in their veils, which are often numerous and thick, holes being made for the eyes, which beam sparkling from this dark recess.

The veils conceal the figure no less than the face, or rather they deform it. I hope at least the Egyptian women are better shaped than they appear to be. With rare exceptions, I have seen none, in this strange costume, who appeared elegant and well formed. As they go out very little, and have the

most clumsy covering for the feet, whenever they leave the house, they walk with difficulty. The business of holding the veils in which they are muffled is a great trouble; there is always something ungraceful in their heavy gait, and they almost appear paralyzed or dropsical. It is however their clothing alone that gives them this unseemly appearance; and, judging from the sons they bear, it is certain they must be very well formed. Their dress therefore does them bad service, unless indeed it is intended to deceive the eyes of the profane and infidels.

It is true that they are rarely seen on foot,—usually on horseback or on a donkey, sitting astride; or they are mounted on a camel, seated on a kind of *étagères*, balancing themselves on either side, two, and sometimes four at once, on the oscillating but firm back of the animal. When harems are removed in this manner, they are looked at in passing through the streets or roads, with a curiosity which cannot go beyond a few rapid glances.

The women are thus almost invisible, even when not buried in the impenetrable secrecy of the harem. The general belief is that the Koran prescribes the veil, but this opinion seems to be erroneous. General Soliman Pasha, when asked by our friend Mr. Senior, asserted that the Koran, far from recommending the veil, permits the women to show their face, as well as

their hands and feet. The General is not an Ulema ; but his opinion is confirmed by at least one of the four orthodox sects of Islamism, which also maintains that the women are not bound to cover their faces.

It is at all events certain, that the use of the veil is not an invention of the Koran, and that this custom is, in the East, of much older date than Mohammed. But as the Prophet invites, although obscurely, the wives of the Faithful to let their veils fall quite to their feet,\* a custom which was originally perhaps a mere ordinary practice, has grown into a religious duty, neglected as little as possible. The Koran moreover indicates the limits to be observed, and permits exceptions in the presence of certain members of the family.†

The veil has perhaps two advantages for the women. In a country where, generally speaking, they enjoy so little consideration, it is doubtless a kind of refinement of coquetry, though it can rarely be practised, as they scarcely ever go out. Concealment leaves free play to the imagination, which, if lively, far outstrips the reality. The veil is therefore an incitement to desire.

There is another more real utility in the veil concealing the face. With us, a girl who is ugly may remain a long time, nay her whole life, without getting a husband. The veil spares a woman such disappoint-

\* Sourat xxxiii. 59.

† Sourat xxxiii. 55.



ments, though perhaps it prepares them for the husband. No man here ever sees the figure of the woman he is to marry ; and if the surprise of the husband, when after the marriage ceremony he first uncovers his wife's face, is sometimes agreeable, it may often be very distressing. It is true that he can easily find consolation, by speculating on taking another wife, or getting a speedy divorce. Thanks to the veil, however, the woman has been married, and is at least saved the pain of being forced by her ugliness to remain single all her life.

These unhappy beings have, indeed, little to compensate for the natural disadvantages from which they may suffer. Women here, and I believe in all Mohammedan countries, have scarcely any occupation. They are rarely taught anything ; and the life they lead keeps them, (with some honourable exceptions,) in entire ignorance, as well as in a state of indolence, which would prevent any mental improvement, even in those most gifted with natural abilities. I have already remarked, how ill the majority among the lower classes tend their children, great as is their maternal love ; nor can these women do the most ordinary needlework, for which moreover their hard labour leaves no time.

In the higher classes the evil is different, but equally great. With the practice of polygamy, it is

impossible to entrust the domestic arrangements to all the wives ; they cannot learn the art of house-keeping, under a roof where it would be disputed by twenty rivals ; this task was therefore formerly left to the discretion of the eunuchs. At present, in Egypt, the administration of the harem is confided either to the master's mother, or to the wife who has had the good fortune to bear the first child. She is occupied with the cares confided to her, whilst the rest have nothing to do, and find it no easy matter to wile away the tedious hours. Some are very skilful in ornamental work, marvellous specimens of which issue from the harems ; others spend their time in reading poetry and novels ; indeed, it was in his harem that Mehemet Ali learned to read, when above forty years of age.

Few of the women however have any serious occupation. They have no power even over their dress ; and, as Montesquieu remarks, "This care, which seems so peculiarly suited to woman, and is everywhere else her first concern, is nothing to them. Their dress is provided for them, as it is for children."

In visiting at Alexandria the institution of the *Sœurs de St. Vincent de Paul*, I at once saw that the greatest service that can be rendered to the Mussulman women is to teach them to use the needle. These

excellent Sisters have not failed to notice this point, and needlework is the principal object of the instruction they give their pupils. To European women even, who are free, this is a highly useful talent, but to the Mohammedans its value is inestimable; and if all the opulent ladies were able to pass their time in the harem in this innocent occupation, they would be spared much of their present inevitable ennui, and escape many dangers to which they are exposed.

But the instruction given by these Sisters, at Alexandria and Cairo, notwithstanding all their zeal and charity, can be shared by very few girls. The education of woman must come to be regarded as a useful element in Mussulman families; and how can this education, so ill understood even among us, be better comprehended in these semi-barbarous countries? I hesitate not to say, that, as long as the women here remain in their present state, civilization will make no profound or durable progress.

Whence can a reform be looked for? This is a question of the greatest delicacy and intricacy; and the men will have much to reform in themselves, before they can effect any change in the women who are subject to them. I know, from more than one indirect confidential source, that the men complain of having no companions, and of finding nothing to attach their heart and mind in the beings to whom

they are united. Whose fault is this but that of the men? It is true that the present generation, which suffers and complains, has not created this state of things; it is a lamentable heritage of the past, which it endures and perpetuates, and at the same time condemns. But evil begets evil; and when man reduced woman to this deplorable condition, he little expected that she would one day avenge her degradation, by leaving such a void in the soul of her husband, or rather master.

In justice it must be admitted, that the Koran has not been the cause of this degradation: it found detestable manners already prevailing, which it was unable to change, although it attacked them at many points. The Koran has not indeed raised woman, but it has not degraded her as much as might be inferred from her present condition in Mohammedan countries. It recognizes the incontestable supremacy which nature has bestowed on man,\* though it does not, like the Bible, regard this supremacy as a punishment of her on whom it is exercised.† It goes even so far as to permit the husband to use force in case of disobedience.

But these humiliating and severe injunctions are accompanied by some of a mild and gentler character. In the fourth Sourat, devoted as its title

\* Sourat iv. 38; ii. 228.

† Genesis iii. 16.

denotes, to women, although containing many things foreign to them, it repeatedly recommends gentleness and good treatment.\* In some places it expresses, with equal delicacy and profoundness, the true relations of husband and wife, as they are understood among us in the most complete unions of head and heart. In one of those rapturous expressions of admiration and gratitude to God, which are so frequent in the Koran, Mohammed exclaims, "It is one of the signs of his power to have created you of dust; it is one likewise to have given you wives, sprung from yourselves, for you to live with. He has established love and tenderness between you. Herein are signs for those who reflect."† In another place, Mohammed commences the Sourate specially dedicated to women with these words: "O men! fear the Lord who regards you; and respect the womb that has borne you."

Such are the terms in which the Wife and the Mother are mentioned in the Koran. If the manners of the people had been capable of seconding and developing these religious principles, Islamism would have been saved; and its social structure might have been expanded and become elevated on the sacred basis of family life.

It appears clear from some passages in the Koran,

\* Sourat iv. 3.

† Sourat xxx. 20.

hat, before the mission of the Prophet, incest with mothers and daughters was of frequent occurrence, revolting as is the thought. It is not probable that Mohammed would have thought of prohibiting this sage, had it not existed; and the reprobation he bestows upon it seems to show, that it had not previously excited the remorse and horror of the people whom he addressed. These infamous practices are much more likely to occur in a country and climate where the women are marriageable so early, and the difference of age between sons and mothers, fathers and daughters, is slight. But I must turn from these abominations.

Another and less doubtful reform was introduced by Mohammed with regard to female infants. It appears unquestionably to have been a custom among the Arabs from the remotest times, to bury their daughters alive, whenever any family consideration or motives of interest rendered their birth unwelcome.\* Mohammed prohibited these frightful murders, and succeeded in suppressing them among his first followers. In the famous oath of Acaba, which he required to be taken by twelve of the principal chiefs of tribes, he made them swear not to kill their children. M. Caussin de Perceval, in his excellent work on the History of the Arabs, has noticed this fact, which

\* Sourat lxxxi. 8.

reflects honour on Mohammed, whilst it shows what were the manners and habits against which the reformer had to contend.\*

Notwithstanding however all his energetic and laudable efforts, he did not liberate woman in the East from the curse which seems to lie upon her, ever since the transgression of Eve. The Commentaries on the Mussulman law, especially that of Khalil ben Ishak, so well translated by the learned Dr. Perron, show the endless humiliations to which woman is subjected. In the minutely detailed practices of Mohammedan devotion, she is continually reminded of the impurity which is represented as a crime that nothing can efface. A woman while still young is not allowed to attend the public prayers, lest her presence should interrupt the faithful; and she must have attained a certain age before she can be admitted to this privilege.

Unhappy sex! If the Mohammedans believed in the Hebrew Scriptures, they might say that man continued to revenge himself on woman, for the curse she first brought upon him by rendering him unworthy of Eden.

Nor is Mohammed in any degree more chargeable with the evils of polygamy and divorce: he found both these deplorable institutions in existence. It is

\* Perceval, vol. iii. page 2.

true, that he did not attempt to abolish them, since they were rooted in the habits and faith of these peoples: but he regulated the conditions of repudiation with equity and mildness, and on this point doubtless adopted the rules laid down in the Book of Deuteronomy.\*

It would be equally wrong to attribute polygamy to Mohammed. The Bible shows that, long before his time, the practice was common in the East.† The seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines of Solomon are well known; and if sages allowed themselves such licence, what must have been the usual conduct of those rich enough to maintain *se-raglios*?

Mohammed limited polygamy to four legitimate wives; a great restraint apparently upon the passions of the opulent men of that age. The Prophet went even further; and it is evident that he inclined, in his precepts at least, if not in his example, to monogamy. In the celebrated fourth Sourat, he says expressly (ver. 3): "If you fear to be unjust, marry only one wife or one slave." It is true that Mohammed, instead of restricting himself all his life to one wife, as during the time when he was the husband of the widow Khadija, had as many as nine: but this was the privilege of the Prophet, which the Imams,

\* Deut. xxiv. 1, 2, 3.

† 1 Kings xi. 3.



who pretend to be descended from him, have not failed to inherit.

It is certain that, if the Ulemas, armed with this text of the Koran, were to use it skilfully, they would be able to effect the triumph of monogamy over the deplorable custom which now prevails. I admit that great perseverance and address would be required to accomplish such a radical reform ; but it is of so great importance, that the attempt would be worthy of the generous policy of Abdul Medjid. He would be supported in this undertaking by all that portion of his subjects who have remained faithful to monogamy, and by the sympathy of all civilized nations. It would be the first step to the regeneration of the East, one which involves no question of abolishing the Koran, but solely of interpreting it aright ; and the explanations of the doctors of the law would suffice to pave the way for, and to effect, a moral revolution, of which this unhappy community stands so much in need.

The Christian communities in which we live, so prosperous, and so superior, notwithstanding all the vices that still deform them, have never known the disasters which polygamy engenders. It appears, from Montesquieu,\* that the Emperor Valentinian, at the end of the fourth century, attempted to establish polygamy ; but notwithstanding the imperial permission,

\* *Esprit des Loïs*, liv. xvi. ch. 2.

it made little progress, and Theodosius abolished it without difficulty. Custom perhaps opposed it still more effectually than religion.

Among the people whom I am visiting, custom is much stronger than the law, which has merely followed in its track. It would have been worthy of a man of genius like Mohammed to enter upon a conflict, in which he might perhaps have fallen, but which held out the prospect of an unsullied glory had he come off victorious. I admit that he would have encountered many great obstacles and rooted prejudices; some idea of which may be formed from an incident which took place in one of the principal towns of Egypt, a few days before our arrival. The merchants of the town were engaged in a dispute with the governor, a man equally rapacious, dishonest, and brutal; and the quarrel had reached such a height, that the Vakeel, or secretary of the divan, had himself taken part against the governor, who, not being able to write, was greatly embarrassed by the revolt of his amanuensis. The Vakeel had sworn by his marriage vow that he would not write a line more for the prevaricating magistrate. The merchants put faith in his solemn assurance, and in fact the man kept his word. The resistance however did not last long: by threats, or perhaps by more seductive means, the governor induced him to yield, and the unhappy man wrote a

paper of some importance. Instantly a great outcry arose; not among the merchants who were betrayed, but—among whom will the reader guess?—the relatives of the Vakeel's wife. He had sworn upon his marriage, and this implied that, if he broke his oath, a divorce must take place, since his wife was, in fact, his wife no longer. His oath he must keep, and the relatives did not leave him until he had agreed to the divorce, which the poor woman desired as little as himself. Such is the importance attached here to the marriage tie: an oath on a matter of mere personal interest, inconsiderately taken, sufficed to break it. Could the husband have believed that a merely formal promise would cost him a union to which he clung with attachment, he doubtless would not have made it: but the kinsfolk, in their scrupulous observance of the oath, would listen to no excuse, and did not hesitate to sacrifice their sister's position and welfare.

In speaking of the women, I should be naturally led to touch on the subject of the harems; but I stop at the threshold of these inviolable retreats, and hardly venture to say a word upon so delicate a subject. If the reader consults Miss Martineau with respect to the interior of these prisons, she will tell him what abodes of sadness they are: she describes the terrible impression they made upon her, under the influence of which she wrote the best pages perhaps of her work on Egypt

and Syria. Men have not, like her, the privilege of penetrating into the harems ; but I believe she is not mistaken ; and, from what I have heard, I conclude that Miss Martineau has told the simple truth, lamentable as her recital is.

The rich possessors of harems are generally mild, and even generous, in their conduct toward their wives and slaves ; but they cannot extinguish in many of these women, the natural desire of liberty, which becomes more intense, in proportion as intercourse with the women of the West, and acquaintance with their condition, are diffused among them. Still less can jealousy and strife be prevented among women, living together under the same roof and the same master. It is impossible to extinguish the passions of all sorts which agitate them, in the habitual indolence to which they are condemned. What discords for the master to calm ! What claims to adjust ! What puerile fancies to satisfy ;—to say nothing of more serious cares !

It is manifest from various passages of the Koran,\* that the Prophet enjoyed no greater tranquillity with his wives than any of his followers : he was assailed and wearied by their incessant demands and insatiable rapacity : more than once he was obliged to yield ; and thus, in a celebrated verse,† he promised, for the sake of peace, not to add to the nine legitimate wives

\* Sourat xxxiii. 29.

† Sourat xxxiii. 52.

he possessed, and to content himself with the purchase of slaves for the future. At other times the Prophet, after exhausting his patience in concessions and compliances, was obliged to threaten his nine wives with divorce, which was the only way of putting an end to their demands. If a man like Mohammed had such grievous quarrels in his household, it may be presumed that the true Believers at the present day enjoy no greater tranquillity. It is not therefore the women alone who desire a change ; the masters of the harems may possibly desire it almost equally.

I will not enlarge on considerations of such difficulty, with which I am not sufficiently acquainted to be sure that my judgment is correct. If however the two parties interested really and earnestly desire reform, it may not be so distant as is imagined. The influence of civilization may rapidly foster these tendencies, and the first step in progress will lead to others.

There are some Turks, and still more Arabs, I am told, who wish to set resolutely about this reform, and have themselves adopted the European mode of living, with one wife, and bringing up their children carefully like good fathers of a family. But further, they have attempted to produce their wives in public, and with their faces uncovered. Not that they would go into society, in our sense of the term ; for this, as it exists

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in our salons, is unknown in Mussulman countries ; a void attributable to the harem, which is attended by a multitude of painful consequences it would be useless to enter upon. Some of these courageous Mussulmans may have persevered in their laudable resolution, and have remained faithful to the single companion of their choice, but the attempt to exhibit (if I may use the word) the poor women has been quite a failure. The very few, who ventured to show themselves, were received in a manner not at all calculated to make them desire to renew the experiment. The popular manners still energetically oppose this reform, simple as it appears. Perhaps the necessary prudence was not used in attempting a change, which would require all the power of a persevering and wise Government.

Scarcely had Mohammed Said attained to power, when he abolished slavery,—thus outstripping the demands of the Western nations who came to the succour of Islamism, when menaced by Russia. This laudable measure of the Viceroy was executed with vigilance and rigour ; and as the places through which the slaves were imported were few and well known, it was not difficult to close the markets, and to prevent the frauds, which moreover merchants would not have risked, with the certainty of punishment before their eyes. The abolition of slavery leads to one important result,—the harems will receive no more female slaves ;

below the favourite and legal wives the only inferior class of women will be servants. This change, of so profoundly important a character, has been effected without any opposition,—a fact which augurs favourably. But further, the slaves of the harems have been declared free, as well as all the other slaves of Egypt: they are at liberty to leave their prison, if that prison is painful to them; very few however have quitted their masters, and this is a circumstance worthy of remark.

Thus we see the state of things undergoing a daily change and improvement, and we may look with hope to the future.

One thing may be asserted—and it is a cheering reflection—that the conduct of the unmarried women is excellent. Examples of unchastity before marriage are rare among us; but here they are yet more unfrequent; and indeed almost unheard of. It is true that the parents watch their daughters very closely, and, by a tacit understanding, all the family keep careful guard over them. But the girls owe their protection to themselves quite as much as to others, and are guarded by their own firmness, even more than by the surveillance of those around them.

I regret that I cannot affirm that their married life is equally chaste; but it is a great thing that their youth is so. A girl who falls from virtue is utterly

ruined, and is certain never to find a husband. With the Jews, in ancient times, opinion appears to have been still more inexorable; their law condemns the culprit to be stoned, like an adulteress.\* I may observe, that the same chapter of Deuteronomy shows, that the singular custom to which I have alluded in my last Letter, was not exclusively Egyptian, as has been imagined.

A subject of such importance as polygamy, especially with the frightful consequences it entails, leads us naturally to examine its causes. If necessary, and inevitable, they must be submitted to, however deplorable; but if they originate with man, it is right to investigate their sources, and to ascertain whether man may not be able to suppress an evil to which he has himself voluntarily given birth.

Montesquieu has treated this question with the marvellous sagacity of his genius, both sportively in the '*Lettres Persanes*,' and with the gravity which the subject demands, in his '*Esprit des Lois*.' In my opinion, since his time, nothing more able has been written upon this subject.

The first cause he assigns to polygamy is the precocious nubility of women: they are mothers at the age of nine or ten years,—at latest, eleven or twelve. Full-grown at this early age, they fade as quickly; and

\* Deut. xxii. 21.



as the husband wears much better, and his decline is not so rapid, he is driven to take younger wives in addition to the first. A second reason is, that in a country where the means of living are easy, the maintenance of several wives is not so expensive as in civilized communities like ours; and a man may, without much difficulty, maintain many wives. A third reason is, that in this climate more girls are born than boys, and consequently each man may be the husband of several wives.

The consequences of this plurality of wives are evident. They must be secluded, not only from the world, but from the rest of the family. Even in the interior of the house, the *gynæceum* must be kept strictly apart, and no one but the master can pass the threshold. As changes of attachment and inclination frequently occur, it is impossible to entrust the government and administration of the household to any of these wives of a day. They are all placed under one yoke, which is often odious to them, and the husband is perpetually besieged by the quarrels of his favourites and eunuchs. Lastly, the strictest seclusion and surveillance can alone secure to him the virtue of this impassioned sex.

Montesquieu appears to lay great stress upon this last condition; and he does not hesitate to say that the conduct of the women thus imprisoned is ad-

mirable. With all deference to his genius, I find it very difficult to feel the smallest esteem or admiration for a virtue which requires bolts and locks to preserve it. Conduct is only truly admirable, when, with the possibility to err, which accompanies liberty of action, reason combats desire, and successfully subdues the passions. It is unjust to Mussulman women, in my opinion, to suppose that their discretion is the mere result of their imprisonment ; certain it is that, in spite of all the precautions taken, their virtue is not to be boasted of, for the very reason that it is never permitted free exercise.

From the other reasons alleged by Montesquieu, I must venture likewise to dissent, with all respect for the opinions of so great a man. I cannot think that the precocity of the women is any cause of polygamy. This peculiarity in the women of the East is an unquestionable fact ; but the licentiousness of the men, which abuses it, must also be taken into account. In our climate the law has fixed the marriageable age at fifteen ; and custom usually defers the time of union three, four, or five years beyond that period. If, unfortunately, the contrary usage prevailed, nature would even in our latitudes not prevent the frequent occurrence of mothers at twelve or thirteen years of age. But custom and public opinion have been wiser among civilized nations than in the

East. They are more prudent even than the law, and refrain from taking advantage of it, and from withering these transient flowers before they reach maturity.

It may be true that, in certain provinces, a larger proportion of girls are born than of boys, although the statistics which Montesquieu cites are very questionable, when we consider the inaccuracy of our own. But I do not regard polygamy as a remedy for this evil; and as it exists almost exclusively in the rich classes, who are never very numerous, it can scarcely compensate the disproportionate increase of female births. With us, it is a well-ascertained fact that the births of boys exceed those of girls; yet it is equally true, that the number of women always preponderates over that of men, because the labours of the latter are very often of a dangerous and fatal kind. This excess in the number of women in our countries might therefore be alleged as a reason or an excuse for polygamy; but we abstain from it, to the great benefit of our morality and happiness. It is probable that the inhabitants of the East also, if they desired it, could likewise abandon the practice.

Lastly, the facility of maintaining a number of wives appears to me quite as little a cause of polygamy as the preceding considerations. As I have said, in spite of this alleged facility, polygamy never

extends beyond the opulent classes ; and in the lower ranks the seraglio finds a substitute in the frequency of divorce, the cost attending which is only a few piastres to the Kadi, a few to the poor woman who is repudiated, and a like sum to the new wife, who will soon be turned adrift in her turn.

The greatest evil of polygamy, in my opinion, is the corruption and degradation of marriage it has caused. Marriage does not exist among the Oriental nations under its indispensable and immutable conditions. They are merely apparent, even in the truest unions, divorce being always impending, and always easy. When the upper classes understand and respect so little the sanctity of the tie which unites husband and wife, the father and mother of the family, it would be a miracle if those in a lower position comprehended and respected it better.

I repeat that, in my opinion, the true cause of polygamy lies far more in the corruption of morals, than in the very questionable influence of climate. To combat this corruption is the province of those who study and deplore it ; and it would be very unjust to despair of the East, and imagine that the evil cannot be overcome. For my own part, though I am not an extravagant optimist, I entertain a firm hope of amelioration ; and I think that, when we recall the progress made during the last forty years in Egypt,

we may look forward to the future without much distrust. It would indeed redound to the glory of Egypt, semi-civilized as she is, to take the initiative on this point, after having already set so many noble examples.

## LETTER VI.

## THE NILE.

Suez, December 16th, 1855.

I AM just returned from seeing the wonders of Egypt, from Alexandria to the Isle of Philæ, in Nubia, where our course ended, as did that of the French army in 1798, according to the inscription it left on the wall of the Temple of Isis. These wonders have filled me with astonishment and delight: but the greatest, in my eyes, is that which man did not create, and which gave birth to all the rest—the Nile. In ascending the river for two hundred leagues, and descending it again from the first Cataract to Boulak, the port of Cairo, I have not ceased admiring it, under all the different aspects it presented; and I often asked myself how it could be, that such a gift of God had failed to make the recipients of it the best and happiest people on earth. I shall attempt to explain this melancholy pro-

blem. Nature could not bestow upon man a greater blessing than the Nile; and yet, generally speaking, the population of Egypt has at all periods been degraded and unfortunate. What is the cause of this contradiction?

The Nile, alone among the rivers of the globe, has a periodical rising, the regularity of which has never once been interrupted, for four thousand years at least that man has known and profited by its inundations. Every year, about the summer solstice, at the end of June, from causes still very imperfectly known, the river gradually rises, in the upper country whence it descends, and continues to swell as it approaches the sea, into which it empties itself. This progressive increase continues for nearly four months, and reaches its height in the middle of October. The river then sinks, as slowly as it has risen; and when, in June, its waters are at the lowest, it begins to rise again as in the preceding year; with this only difference, that the rise is a little more or less considerable. Its mean increase is from nineteen to twenty-three feet, from which it very rarely varies.

It may easily be imagined that, notwithstanding this regularity, certain anomalies occur, which nature never fails to present. Thus the rising is more rapid one year than another. The waters remain a longer or shorter time on the land, as the decrease, like the

increase, has its variations. The phenomenon, as a whole, does not change; but the details vary, and the diversity which nature commonly presents takes place within certain limits. One year is never in all respects identical with that which precedes or follows.

In proportion to the height the river attains, it waters a greater or less quantity of land. As water always maintains its level, a very slight difference is sufficient to cause one tract of ground to be inundated, whilst the adjacent districts are dry.

The periodical recurrence of the phenomenon is itself a great benefit · but the Nile has also two other advantages, no less admirable; it never devastates its shores, and its swollen waters perpetually deposit a mud, which is the most fertilizing manure.

In France, when rivers swell, their waters rush along their course in impetuous torrents, causing ravages which the skill of man is unable to prevent. This is never the case with the Nile, which is never sudden or furious in its overflow: its bed, which is scarcely ever disturbed, is hollowed out into a sort of canal, within which its waters are embanked. In the present year, for example, it commenced falling on the 11th of October; during our voyage its banks, which are mostly perpendicular, already rose two or three feet above the water: in a few months they will be twenty feet above the low-water mark. The stream, not less



wide, but less deep, will run off between these banks, which it has formed for itself, as a river flows away gently in sluices, through which the skill of the engineer directs it. Thus travellers who are so careless or so ill-informed as to ascend the Nile in the spring, or beginning of summer, see nothing of its banks, which always overhang the boat.

The river ordinarily runs at the rate of only twenty-seven inches a second, or little more than a mile and a half an hour. When the river is at its highest, the water flows much more rapidly, but scarcely exceeds a league in the hour. This arises from its fall being almost as regular as its swelling. Assouan, on the confines of Upper Egypt and Nubia, is only 590 feet above the Mediterranean, at a distance of 250 leagues; Thebes is about 400 feet; Siout is 312; and Cairo is only 46, at fifty leagues from the sea. The inclination is thus imperceptible, and diminishes by successive and almost equal degrees. This is the reason that the flow of the river is never impetuous.

The quiet course of the Nile, however, and its periodical rise and fall, which assist the labours of agriculture with strict regularity, are nothing in comparison to the deposit of mud which the river leaves, wherever its waters extend. Every year this mud fertilizes and freshens the land anew, and the fortunate cultivator has no trouble to manure his ground, since nature

furnishes a substitute, excellent in quality as it is inexhaustible. Modern science has analyzed this marvellous product, and chemistry has shown its component ingredients. Silica and alumina are the principal,—one in the proportion of forty-two, and the other of twenty-four per cent. ; the peroxide of iron exists in a proportion of thirteen per cent. ; it is this which gives the waters of the Nile their reddish colour during the time of their rise, after which they become again almost blue during the low water. In addition to these principal elements, the water contains carbonates of lime and magnesia, organic matter and ulmic acid, and lastly nearly ten per cent. of water.

Such is the composition of this mud, the effects of which excited the wonder of the ancients, not less than our own. It appears that the fertilizing quality is especially attributable to the presence of the small portion of organic matter, which amounts to 2·8 per cent. Whence is this organic matter derived, and how can it be renewed each year in an unvarying proportion? This is a very difficult question, and can hardly be answered but by hypothesis.

It is believed by some that, in the immense plains through which the Nile flows in central Africa, and where no one has ever penetrated, there are innumerable herds of wild beasts, whose detritus, of every kind, is swept down by the waters which cover these

plains at the period of their rise ; this is supposed to form a sort of weak guano, which the river carries off.

Another explanation is the following : during the periods of high-water considerable masses of earth are incessantly detached from the banks, which I have just described, and washed down the stream ; and it is these successive landslips which form the mud and manure. This second theory, in some respects quite correct, is incomplete ; it does not explain how the organic matter exists in the portions of earth which fall away under the action of the water.

So much respecting the composition and nature of the waters of the river : but its periodical and remarkable rising has given occasion to many more hypotheses, from the remotest times to the present day. The general opinion is, that this swelling of the waters is caused by the tropical rains, which fall in central Africa. These rains, we may observe, must be as regular as the inundation ; and the phenomenon of their recurring on a certain day, would be scarcely less astonishing than the rising of the Nile, which has taken place annually with remarkable punctuality for above four thousand years, scarcely varying more than three or four days, about the summer solstice.

Another very strange hypothesis is that of M. De La Chambre, the Cartesian. He supposed that the nitre, contained in the land adjacent to the river, ex-

pands and ferments by the action of the heat at a certain season of the year, and swells the waters with which it mixes. After this fermentation and evaporation, the nitre returns to its natural state, and the river falls as it had risen. This original idea is developed at length in a quarto volume, published by De La Chambre in 1665. He had made it known long before; and the celebrated Campanella, to whom he showed it, is said to have pronounced it one of the most rational hypotheses. As much can hardly be said of the preface to the work, in which the author, comparing Louis the Fourteenth to the Nile, strives, with the most exaggerated amplifications, to prove all the points of resemblance between the “Grand Monarque” and the “Grand fleuve,”—both so celebrated, both fruitful in benefits, both powerful, both unique, etc. The author gives it as his opinion, that the mud carried down by the Nile, in whatever quantity, is derived from Egypt alone.

These explanations may pass for what they are worth; I shall confine my remarks to what I have myself had an opportunity of observing.

When visiting the Mekias, or Nilometer, in the island of Rodah at Old Cairo, we took some of the mud deposited on the steps of the reservoir, as pure as could be desired. It is a sort of brown earth (*terre d’Egypte*), of the consistence of rather stiff clay, with an ex-

tremely fine grain. It is very soft and unctuous to the touch : it dissolves easily in water, and is almost inodorous. When dried it becomes very hard, as is seen in the deep cracks with which the ground is furrowed, some time after the waters have retired. At times our horses could scarcely walk in these innumerable ruts ; and when we took up a piece in our hands it seemed as compact and almost as heavy as stone.

Whatever may be the true nature of this mud, the water which holds it in suspension is not only adapted to fertilize the country, but is also exquisite to the taste. It can be drunk without inconvenience in the hottest weather ; and when served to us in the *gargoulettes*, small earthen vessels in which liquids are cooled, we drank it with delight. I am not surprised that the princesses of the family of the Ptolemies, who married and settled in Syria, had this water brought such a distance to them, and that the Sultans are said to have it frequently brought them to Constantinople.

The mud thus formed deposits annually, on the land which it inundates, a bed of sediment ; and these strata, accumulating one upon another, form that excellent vegetable earth which I mentioned in my first Letter. In some places the thickness may amount to thirty or forty feet ; and there is no reason why it should not continue to increase indefinitely,

becoming more fertile in proportion to its depth. It has been proved, since the time of Herodotus, who was the first to state the fact,\* that the soil of the valley rises incessantly. Modern science estimates the rising as nearly five inches in a century. Thus we see it is somewhat rapid; and, without having such precise data, Herodotus feared, two thousand three hundred years ago, that, from this constant rising of the land, Egypt would one day become uninhabitable, and be converted into a vast marsh by the Nile, which would not flow off.

These predictions are not realized, and I know not what cause perpetually averts them. The fact however is unquestionable, and the sight of the layers of mud on the banks, superposed one upon another, is sufficient to show that the soil is much higher at the present day than it was in ancient times. These strata are perfectly horizontal, and, as M. de Negrelli pointed out to me, correspond with mathematical exactitude to the lines as regularly parallel of the Arabian and Libyan chains of mountains, distant from the river at most two or three leagues on the right and left.

The valley of the Nile, which has consequently a mean width of five or six leagues, is thus a mere alluvium, a narrow and long oasis, a strip of land, fertile in the extreme, between two deserts which

\* Euterpe, cap. xiii.

enclose without encroaching on it, and which would soon become equally fertile, if man were able to conduct thither water in sufficient quantity. How high does the course of the Nile extend, together with the valley of vegetation which it forms? No one knows; and this question, which has excited the eager curiosity of the ancients, remains unsolved by the efforts and courage of modern travellers. The sources of the Nile are still unknown.

I believe the traveller who has ascended the highest point of the river was a French engineer in the service of Egypt, M. Darnaud, who, in 1841, by the order of Mehemet Ali, followed the Nile for 1200 leagues above its mouths. Nearly as much was known in the time of Herodotus\* as at present: he relates that the ancients were acquainted with the course of the river for a distance occupying a voyage of four months. All that is known at this day, in addition, is simply that at a certain height the Nile is formed of the union of two rivers,—the largest, called Bahr-el-Abiad, or the White River, on the west; and the other, Bahr-el-Azrek, or the Blue River, on the east.

The Viceroy is said to have the intention of resuming the exploration of these distant countries, which concern Egypt no less than science generally. It is certainly a point of great interest to ascertain

\* Euterpe, cap. xxxi.

the sources of this wonderful river, the unchangeable causes of its regular increase, and its inexhaustible fertilizing properties, which appear to have been undiminished for ages. In this view the subject concerns European science. In another it is of importance to Egypt,—to ascertain, and to work, the rich natural products which these remote countries possess in immense abundance. As the mud of the Nile contains a considerable quantity of iron, it is proved that the river runs through districts of this ore, the discovery of which would be of incalculable benefit; and there also appear to be mines of gold, silver, copper, etc., in addition to all the products of the soil. Here are sufficient incentives to stimulate courage and labour.

It would be worthy of so enlightened a prince as Mohammed Said to hazard a new expedition. The fourth degree of north latitude has already been reached; this is the point to start from, in any fresh exploring journey. The expedition should comprise various scientific men; mineralogy, botany, hydrography, astronomy, and especially geography, would all have their field of research. To discover the sources of the Nile, would be to immortalize their names, and that of the prince who should have aided so noble and dangerous an enterprise.

The Nile presents an immense natural system of



irrigation, which man has only to direct, in order to derive from it all the treasures which it contains. Thus the greatest and almost the only subject of interest to Egypt is the construction and maintenance of the canals: the more she has of these, the richer she becomes. She possesses neither forests nor mines, which is an immense want; but she has this wonderful stream, capable of supplying many, if not all her wants and deficiencies.

The management of water, even on a private estate, is always a difficult matter, but one of the greatest importance. It may easily be imagined what this is in Egypt, the entire existence of which country depends on it, and which has eight thousand square miles to irrigate. The most illustrious princes are those who have devoted their attention to these labours most usefully, and the principal glory of Mœris (Thothmosis I.), of Sesostris (Rameses II., or the Great), is their having constructed canals. Others of the Pharaohs, the Ptolemies, the Roman Emperors Adrian and Trajan, even the Khalifs, have engaged in this task with more or less zeal, in proportion as they studied to enrich and benefit their subjects. One of the most serious charges that can be brought against the Mamelukes, is their having neglected all general administrative measures for the irrigation of the country. As soon as Mehemet Ali obtained the mastery, he

undertook works for the construction of canals with a sort of frenzy; and it is well known what a sacrifice of men he made to complete the Mahmoudieh, with a rapidity that surpassed the achievements of the Pharaohs. In the space of a few months he cut a canal twenty leagues in length. With a similar view he constructed the Barrage of the Saidieh, and the present Viceroy contemplates a second, a hundred and fifty leagues distant, near Selseleh in Upper Egypt.

The reader is perhaps aware of the obstacles to an equitable distribution of water between neighbouring grounds. Our legislation, with all its scientific knowledge, has not been able to settle satisfactorily these subjects of litigation and rival demands. They are equally difficult to settle by arbitration or by process of law, and occur even where the water flows through public property. The reader may imagine what prudence, wisdom, spirit of association, and disinterestedness, the Egyptian cultivators would require, to prevent continual discord among them as to their rights of this kind.

This was a work suited to a higher state of society, of which the age of the Pharaohs was incapable, and which the majority of the peoples of Europe would not undertake even now with any success. I believe it is no injustice to the peasantry of our country to imagine they would fail, if subjected to the same con-

ditions as the inhabitants of Egypt. The Fellah at the present day is incapable of solving this problem, even under the protection of an enlightened power : he was not less incapable, several thousand years ago. Nevertheless it was needful for the problem to be solved, or the country would have been left to ruin, and depopulated.

This, I imagine, is the principal and urgent cause, although not perhaps the sole one, which established despotism in Egypt at so early a period, and has maintained it, in greater or less force, down to our times. This, I fear, is the cause which will uphold despotism for a long time to come. There is wanted a supreme and absolute power, with perfect freedom of action, to protect these common interests. There are wanted, on both shores of the Nile, to regulate, assist, and in a manner to complete its operations, great secondary arteries, beside those myriads of channels which every cultivator should have upon his own land.

A glance at the map of Lower Egypt will show the justness of this metaphor. The infinite number of canals, ramifying and intersecting one another in every direction, may be compared to the innumerable veins pervading parts of the human body, which the skill of the anatomist discovers. All these canals have been constructed by man. Instead of the five natural

mouths of the Nile, two only remain, those of Rosetta and Damietta, which separate some leagues below Cairo: in their place, smaller artificial watercourses have been created, divided, and subdivided; and thus, by conducting the waters of the Nile over the whole country, and under all these forms, an incomparable fertility is ensured to Egypt. Isolated villages, and even towns, would not have been able to concert and carry out these indispensable works.

By the force of circumstances, the population has been obliged to delegate the work to more powerful hands; and in transferring to them the care of their means of subsistence, which depend on the management of the river, they have also committed to them the absolute disposal of their lands and persons. There has never been even a shadow of political life among the people of Egypt; and the subjects have ever been slaves to the power that governed them, wholly ignorant of any kind of rights. With the progress of civilization and enlightenment, this lamentable state of things must change. The Government, without doubt, can and will do much; but it rests with the people to qualify themselves to profit speedily by the liberal and generous views of their ruler. What reforms and ameliorations are required to compensate for this backward state of things, which has existed for so many centuries! Thus the Nile, which is an in-

estimable natural blessing in such a burning climate, may perhaps have been one of the causes of the political destruction of the people.

The Bible, in speaking of the seven years of famine which compelled the Egyptians to give up themselves and their lands to Pharaoh, indicates its source. This might be the consequence of certain natural accidents; but we may imagine also, that the bad distribution of the waters was in some measure a cause; and I venture to propose this comment on the Holy Scriptures. The Pharaohs were not the proprietors of the soil, before the Egyptians invited them to take it in return for feeding them. This was a singular condition, and would hardly, I think, have been adhered to for any length of time after the necessity which suggested it had ceased. A permanent and inevitable cause was also needful, to render so unequal and iniquitous a contract equally permanent.

Ever since the time of the Pharaohs the people of Egypt have been given up to political slavery. I am far from saying, that the Nile is the only cause of this lamentable state of things; and I well know that there are multitudes of peoples who are still more enslaved and more miserable, though they have not the Nile. I merely affirm, that the regulations required by this wonderful river have furnished a kind of necessity, or at least a specious excuse, for tyranny.

I advance this opinion with a certain reserve as regards antiquity ; but at the present time, judging from my own observation, I think it may be affirmed, that Egypt would be in a far worse condition if the Viceroy's power were lessened, and if the Sheiks-el-beled, or village-chiefs, were charged with the task of opening and keeping up canals, raising dykes and dams, —in a word, of regulating all those affairs connected with the Nile, which are of the most vital importance to the country.

It is impossible to see without regret how little men have seconded the beneficence of Providence in giving them such a river as this.

## LETTER VII.

## THE SHEIK-EL-BELED.

Wells of Moses, Dec. 18th, 1855.

AT the conclusion of my last Letter, I mentioned incidentally the Sheiks-el-beled, and expressed a doubt whether they would be able by themselves to manage the interests of Egypt. But who is this Sheik-el-beled, or village chief? I shall briefly introduce the reader to this personage, who is one of considerable importance, in some matters omnipotent, and shall endeavour to draw a faithful, although incomplete, portrait of him.

In a country where the administration is so imperfectly organized, the Sheik-el-beled, or chief of the village, has absolute power over the Fellahs,—the peasants subject to him. If he is enlightened and benevolent, he treats them considerately; if avaricious and cruel, he can oppress them without measure;

and his tyranny, when he chooses to exercise it, is uncontrolled.

Such, in brief, are the immense powers committed almost unreservedly to the Sheik's discretion, and which he uses at pleasure. He it is who adjusts and levies the taxes, in many cases allots out the land, and fixes the *corvées*; and it is he who regulates the conscription.

In France, we regard the assessment in our system of taxation as a masterpiece of administration; and we have reason to be proud of it, when we compare it with that of other countries, and reflect upon the prodigious difficulty of the task. But this has only grown up by degrees, in the course of time, since the Middle Ages. What enlightened and continued care have been necessary to mature this wise and equitable system! How many various and ably concerted steps to be taken, from the Legislature which imposes the taxes, down to the lowest collector who receives them from the tax-payer! Then let the reader reflect too on the number of upright and enlightened men required, the mass of documents and publications of guarantees and securities!

The system is here far more simple, but at the same time more arbitrary and irregular. A village which has a certain quantity of land to cultivate, is taxed in proportion by the Moudir, who receives the orders



direct from the Pasha. The village is answerable for the amount, but it is the Sheik-el-beled, not the village, who pays it directly to the prince; he remits the sum-total of the tax, on the chance of recovering it from the heads of families and the cultivators, who compose the body which he commands. If he is honest, he receives from those under him only the amount he has himself paid; but if dishonestly inclined, he can take more; and the temptation is very strong, to a man almost sure of impunity. The poor Fellah has no means of protection; neither intelligence, courts of justice, publicity, nor perhaps even energy. He submits to the Sheik-el-beled, when oppressed, without daring even to murmur; as this would only cause him fresh vexations, and resistance would but aggravate his wrongs.

Let us not however wholly despise this imperfect administration. Not very long ago, even we had our farmers-general; and it must be remembered that the Revolution of 1789 alone suppressed them, and abolished this intermediate machinery in the great engine of State, which intercepted and appropriated a great part of what ought to have come into the public treasury. The Sheik-el-beled is a farmer-general on a small scale: he advances the taxes of his village to the State, which makes him its collector; and having no regular salary for these laborious duties, he pays

himself precisely as our great financiers did. This is not the way to have very correct accounts, and a man must have superhuman virtue not to fall upon such a slippery path ; nor can we be surprised at the general dishonesty of these tax-gatherers.

It must be remembered that France was not alone in adopting this plan, summary as it was iniquitous. All Europe did the same in the Middle Ages, and many traces might still be found of this deplorable system, which fosters the indolence of governments, while it oppresses the governed. I believe, for example, that most of the internal taxes in Russia are collected in a similar manner : the proprietors of serfs are responsible directly and in a body, for the villages which they possess, and their stewards recover the amounts—Heaven knows in what measure !—from the poor devils subjected to their rod.

In matters of taxation, the Sheik-el-beled is simply a kind of steward ; only that he labours directly for himself, which does not imply that he is either much more generous, or much more loyal in his demands. The poor Fellahs have a proverbial expression, which shows their wretched position : in speaking of a Sheik-el-beled who takes from them more than his due, they dare not say directly that he plunders, but content themselves with remarking that he *eats* a great deal. This euphemism shows both the dread

they have of their chief, and the sagacity of their judgment of him. But an epigram is not a security ; and though they discover that the Sheik *eats* a great deal, they pay not a farthing the less.

This arbitrary assessment of the taxes gives great power ; but there is another evil, which, as a necessary consequence, springs out of the former. It is the Sheik-el-beled who allots the land,—not that he has the folly every year to take the land from one to give it to another ; for with such perpetual changing of hands he would not recover his money, and would become the dupe of his own caprice. Without needing any considerable quantity of stock, in a country so fertile and richly gifted by nature, the cultivator requires some implements and a few head of cattle, together with a certain amount of experience and agricultural knowledge. It is therefore to the advantage of the Sheik-el-beled, for the land to be in the occupation of laborious and skilful persons, to obtain from it as much as possible. His self-interest is, on this point, in accordance with his sense of equity ; and in this matter he will assuredly endeavour to be just, as he is generally a good calculator. But in a country where property is so little settled, as it has been from time immemorial in Egypt, and where the constitution of the family presents such blanks as we have seen,—in a country where every year the boundaries

of the fields are almost effaced by the fertilizing river, —it is easy to understand that the Sheik can do as he likes. Resistance is wholly impossible; and as he always finds friends in those whom he favours, if he makes enemies of those whom he robs, he can always maintain his authority with a little address and energy. He is left to *eat* his fill, however ravenous his appetite, as every one hopes that his voracity will fall most heavily upon the rest.\*

\* The following account of the measures of reform recently adopted by the Viceroy is extracted from the 'Times' newspaper, of March 27, 1857.—TRANSLATOR.

"His Highness Said Pasha, Viceroy of Egypt, published during his late journey, orders to each of the governors of the provinces of of Sennaar-Kordofan, Letaka, Berber, and Dongola, regulating the rents and taxes to be paid by the cultivators of the soil, and abolishing various oppressive customs which former governors countenanced. His Highness further regulated the military service in those provinces. The first order is dated Kartoum, the 26th of last January. It says that, being occupied in devising plans for the prosperity of the country and the happiness of the inhabitants, he will begin by protecting them from oppression. When he arrived in Soudan, and saw the misery which existed in consequence of the inhabitants being oppressed with taxation and overcharges, he demanded of the Sheiks, and the inhabitants who came to meet him, what he could do to secure their tranquillity. They replied by praying that his Highness would reduce the taxes levied on each *sakieh* to 250 piastres. 'But,' said his Highness, 'as my love for my people impels me to give them the greatest possible prosperity, and to secure their affection, and as, moreover, I wish to restore confidence to those who have expatriated themselves, in order that they may return to their country, their minds free from all fear of oppression, injustice, or excessive taxation, I have commanded that the taxes shall be fixed at 200 piastres for each *sakieh*, and no more.'

"The Pasha then commands that the chiefs of districts who formerly collected the taxes shall be dismissed, and the soldiers they

It would be a calumny to suppose that all the Sheiks answer to this dishonourable picture ; on the contrary, there are many exceptions. Their position however is a false, or rather a perilous one, and their probity generally yields to their interest. The central Government does all it can to lighten the burden which presses so heavily upon the lower classes ; and the relief from taxation of the lands which have not the benefit of the inundation, leaving the Sheik free of all rent, prevents his exacting anything from the unfortunate man whose ground has remained barren.

Respecting the *corvées*, however, nothing can moderate or restrain the arbitrary conduct of the Sheik-el-beled. In Egypt, all the public works, which are little more than cuttings or embankments for the canals and roads, are executed by *corvée*, or compulsory service. In such a state of society it cannot be otherwise. Europeans must know something of this, if they look

employed disbanded. Henceforth the villagers themselves will pay the taxes into the hands of the Sheiks. In order to induce the Sheiks to act fairly by the inhabitants, they are to be remunerated for their services. The proprietors of houses where travellers receive hospitality are to be exempt from taxation. Everything which the Government requires, such as camels, provisions, or workmen, is to be paid for, and there is to be no more forced labour. The inhabitants are to be encouraged to cultivate indigo, cotton, and sesame for oil, of which they are to enjoy all the profit. All offences against the laws are to be tried by the Kadis, and the Sheiks are to execute the sentence. His Highness next commands that a postal service shall be established between Cairo and the Ghezirch, in

back upon their past history, and indeed some would but have to regard their present state.

For any work of public interest, or for the execution of an order from the Government, the Sheik-el-beled selects those who are to carry it out; the appointment indeed can rest with him alone. It is clear that no one would offer himself voluntarily, as the labour is generally great and the profit very small. The most indispensable things would remain unaccomplished; and, as matters of public interest concern every individual, those who refused to aid in them would suffer from their own neglect. It is necessary for their own advantage that some external force should in this matter oblige them to act, when they will not do so of their own accord. The appointment made by the Sheik is however not always the most equitable, though it may be necessary. He frequently exempts a man from the *corvée* who is the best adapted for it, and throws the burden upon another who is hardly

Sennaar-Kordofan and Taka, and from Ghezireh to Albou-Khamat. Stations are to be established for camels and dromedaries at ten hours' march distant. He tells them, in case those stations should be attacked, to let him know the fact at Cairo, and that he will send a force 'which will carry terror into the hearts of the aggressors.' In conclusion, the Pasha observes that hitherto the thieves and assassins sentenced to hard labour for life had been confined in the prisons of Soudan, whereas if they had been transported to a distance from their families, it might have had a better effect in deterring them from crime, and that henceforth those sentenced in Soudan to hard labour for life shall be sent to Egypt to expiate their crimes, and those sentenced in Egypt shall be sent to Soudan."

able to do it. Favour and dislike have a great share in these appointments, which are often resorted to by way of punishment and vengeance, while in other cases they are used as rewards. Wherever we stop on the banks of the Nile, to land or take in fuel, we see instances of the manner in which these matters are transacted, and have excellent opportunities of observing them, since we profit by them. Being a party of twenty on board, we should have difficulty in obtaining immediately the horses or asses required for our excursions: were we obliged to go and seek these at the dwellings of the people, our time would be often wasted in a vain search. But the orders have already been given; our arrival is expected. The telegraph, which is carried along the banks of the river, has given notice to the authorities; and whenever we desire to land, we find in a few minutes our beasts all ready. Many of these are superb, and sometimes the Sheiks send their own horses and saddles, which are magnificent. But even without these, we have always more at command than we require; a single order suffices instantly to place at our service all the disposable horses in the village.

The *corvée*, as will be seen, is very convenient for us, at the same time that, in this case, it is lucrative to the people whose services are required: nevertheless, if no payment were given them, they would not

dare to ask for any. The corvée is imperative, and the bakshish which is given is all the more welcome because it might easily be withheld.

At one town, the name of which I forget, our boat stopped to take in coals; we were pressed for time; and our crew, being all very busy at the moment, could not land to get it on board. In a few minutes the order was given, and fifty or more men and children were set to work to carry the coal from the bank to our boat. This corvée, which they supposed would go unrecompensed, generally gave them little pleasure; and our chiaoux had to interfere and hasten the work. The loading of the coal however was speedily performed; and on returning from our walk half an hour afterwards, the steam was up, and we started. I mention only those circumstances which I witnessed; but the reader may easily imagine what must be the corvées for the more arduous labours connected with the village itself, or the demands of the Government.

The corvées, the division of the land, and even the taxation, are however light in comparison with the conscription. This burden is, amongst us, designated by a just and forcible expression—too often perverted by bad passions—as *l'impôt du sang*. The blood-tax is still more legitimate and useful than the money-tax. Unless all defence of society, or rather of the community, against the enemy without, and the no less



formidable internal enemy, is abandoned, an army is necessary; and the most equitable, as well as most national means of raising it is by conscription.

It has taken many centuries for this terrible, but noble state necessity to assume its proper light, and for the world at large to submit to a *corvée*, so frequently fatal. But in most civilized nations the resolution necessary has been bravely taken, and the military service is accepted without much trouble, even when it does not appear to the poor conscript in the light either of honour or duty.\*

In Egypt however, and in all nations similarly backward in civilization, it is quite otherwise. Nature, blind and impetuous even in its best instincts, has the mastery over reason; and it is impossible to describe the frenzied terror which the conscription excites in families, especially to mothers, if not to their sons. Numerous instances have been related of the furious resistance which Mehemet Ali had to encounter when he commenced the organization of the Egyptian army, and the skilful precautions he had to observe, to form it almost secretly and without noise. The Turkish and Albanian officers whom he had in pay, looked

\* These arguments in favour of a conscription will, it is presumed, find little favour with English readers. They are reproduced here, but under the strongest protest against their validity. The conscription is equally odious and pernicious on moral, economical, and political grounds.—TRANSLATOR.

with supreme contempt on the Fellahs, considering them incapable of courage and discipline. The Fellahs, on their side, were filled with dread, and resorted to every kind of mutilation, in the hope of freeing themselves from what they regarded as the heaviest of punishments.

All the perseverance and address of the Pasha were required to succeed in forming this army, which was exercised and trained by French officers, headed by Colonel Sèves (Soliman Pasha), at Assouan, in the south of Egypt, near the first Cataract, far from the envious eyes and the contentions of Alexandria and Cairo. The genius of this officer succeeded in his task ; and the Egyptian army, the formation of which had been attended with so much evil, defeated the Turks at Konieh and Nezib, as it has recently defeated the Russians at Silistria. This was a grand achievement, and an immense service rendered to Egypt, which begins to appreciate the value of institutions of this kind, and gradually to comprehend better the sacrifices they are worth, in consideration of the benefits which they bring.

From the absence in this country, however, as I have before said, of any register or census, there must be some one to choose the young recruits for the army. With us, the certificate and register of birth are sufficient evidence ; but here, in the absence of these,

the Sheik-el-beled acts, and nothing prevents his taking the first who appears. He decrees, on his own authority, that such a one, the son of such a one, is of the age required for service; he then subjects him to the conscription, and his decision is without appeal, since the young man is at least as unable to produce evidence to disprove the assertion as the Sheik-el-beled to prove it. What is the age of the young man? The parents even are ignorant of it, or at least are unable to prove the age they assign him. But the youth is well made, as every one is in this country, almost without exception: he is strong and healthy. The Sheik takes for granted that he is of the right age: go he must,—the order is given, and executed.

Then it is that the resistance begins. The young man would submit readily to his fate, knowing that he will be better off in the army than at home; and the proof of this is, that there are scarcely any deserters. But the father, and still more the mother, will not so easily submit. The young man conceals himself, and it is necessary to carry him off by force. Soldiers are despatched on this mission; and, even if they abstain from any unnecessary cruelty, they are obliged to execute their orders, which they do, notwithstanding the scenes of violence they very often both cause and suffer.

In passing Keneh we witnessed one of these sei-

zures which desolate families, and deprive poor widows of the sons who were their only support. At the gate of the barracks, which are handsome, a woman was sitting under an acacia, uttering heartrending cries: her cheeks were bathed with tears: her dishevelled hair fell upon her unveiled face; her clasped hands, her sobs, her invectives against the soldiers, who were unmoved by her threats and entreaties, all indicated the deepest anguish. Her son had just been carried off by order of the Sheik: she had lost her husband some time before, and this lad alone remained to her. What was to become of her? How should she live, and get her bread, when deprived of him who helped her to earn it? We went up to her; and one of our party, who spoke Arabic, addressed a few words to calm her; but she made no answer. We offered her money, hoping to tranquillize her by this irresistible remedy; but she refused it; and such indifference, almost unheard of in this country, convinced us that her sorrow had no bounds. The unhappy woman was like Rachel: she refused to be comforted, since she had lost her son; the conscription had taken him from her. She might have recollected that in two or three years at most he would probably be restored to her, for the recruits seldom remain a longer time in the regiment; but this separation, although short, seemed to her like death.

The law with us, milder and more equitable, leaves to widows their eldest son as the support of the family ; but in this country there cannot be any such exception ; as there is no certificate of marriage or register of birth, the real *status* of individuals remains unknown, and cannot serve as the basis of any general legislative measure. The Sheik-el-beled, who doubtless knew the situation of the poor woman, ought indeed to have left her child to her, and nominated another recruit in his place. No doubt she reproached the Sheik-el-beled with cruelty and venality ; no doubt she said that if she had been rich enough to purchase his favour, she might have retained her son.

I do not say that these charges, so constantly brought against the Sheiks, are always merited ; but, when we see extortioners of this odious description still brought before our own law-courts, we cannot wonder that these Sheiks, who have no law-courts to fear, readily fall into corrupt practices. One thing is certain, that the Sheiks never select their own sons, unless the latter have a very strong inclination for the army ; and these excellent fathers, who so readily sacrifice the sons of others, are very careful of their own. This may be natural, but it is extremely unjust. The recruiting in France, before the year 1789, was very irregular, and was even accompanied by acts of violence similar to that I have just described ; but no arbitrary selection

of the recruits rested with the village magistrates. In these painful obligations the only impartial judge is chance : but we arrived at this simple means of election only gradually, and it is not surprising that Egypt has not yet adopted a measure which implies many antecedents that country does not possess.

It will be seen what unlimited power is placed in the hands of the Sheik-el-beled, and to what an extent his despotism may be carried, under the influence of avarice, falsehood, or cruelty.

The Sheiks-el-beled, it is true, are the necessary basis of the present system of government in Egypt; but to make them what they ought to be, certain conditions are requisite ; and one amongst many others is, that the country should possess wealthy and enlightened classes, capable of furnishing magistrates, who might be invested with such power, with some security that it would not be abused. The Sheiks-el-beled are usually chosen by the Government from the families of the chief distinction and power in each district. The office is sometimes hereditary, passing in nearly regular succession from father to son ; but these are not sufficient guarantees ; and, whatever care may be exercised in the selection, it is always extremely difficult to find fit men, since the number of the candidates is too limited, and very few of them possess all the requisite qualities.

In justice to the government of the Viceroy it must be admitted, that he strives conscientiously to ameliorate the condition of the Fellahs, by watching closely the administration of the Sheiks. Nevertheless all progress in affairs of this nature is necessarily very slow, and it is only by the gradual instruction of the peasants as well as the higher classes, that they will both acquire a better knowledge of their duties and their rights.

Our worthy municipal councils, in France, are not always remarkable for their ability, and more than one commune might readily be found, containing not a single person able to word any document correctly. The reader may judge what must be the state of things here.

Mehemet Ali adopted the right course, in creating a number of primary schools ; it remains for his successors to pursue it with similar resolution : the first requisite in this country is that the people should learn to read. The Government wants men of capacity, and it is a matter of urgent importance to form and educate them as speedily as possible. One excellent step in progress is, that the royal family and men of opulence send their sons for education to Europe ; but the children of the Fellahs, both boys and girls, should have similar advantages, adapted to their means and condition ; and such a measure would be

attended by equally beneficial results, if schools were multiplied and judiciously organized.

Ignorance, however, does not appear to be the chief obstacle to an amelioration of the condition of the people; although undoubtedly deeply rooted, it is not irremediable. A far greater evil lies in the character of the race, so deeply imprinted by nature, and unhappily strengthened in the course of ages, that it almost appears immutable. I have seen nothing to contradict the opinion that, however intelligent and docile the Fellah may be, he is wholly incapable of exercising any command or authority. In the civil administration, and in the army, this great natural defect in character is grievously felt: even among themselves, the Fellahs are proverbially incapable of command.

Such is the influence of race, that the Turk, notwithstanding his heavy and phlegmatic nature,—contrasting strongly with the elegance and vivacity of the Fellah,—has a peculiar capacity for the exercise of power. From whatever rank of society taken, and whatever may have been his previous history and life, no sooner is he invested with office, than he assumes authority naturally and commands obedience. His orders may often be unreasonable, and it would be surprising were it not so, in a country where a street-porter may be converted into a Grand Vizier; never-



theless it is something, that a man invested with authority, from whatever source, really exercises and applies it. It was this quality, and is this still, which has given to the Turks absolute dominion over this country, and all those which resemble it: they commanded, the rest obeyed, even when the orders were neither of a useful nor enlightened character. The Fellahs, I am told, in no degree possess this natural gift. To what must we attribute this inherent weakness? Can we imagine that a race, so remarkably endowed by nature in some respects, can be doomed to perpetual servitude and subjection? Or may we suppose that the long despotic rule of the Pharaohs broke the spring, and destroyed all the energy of their character? Is their present servitude a result of their former slavery? These are very difficult questions; for my own part, I incline rather to the second solution of them: theories, the force and justice of which I do not deny, cannot decide the question, and it seems impossible not to conclude, from the evidence afforded by the hieroglyphics, that there must have been under the Pharaohs a considerable number of persons capable of forming a powerful hierarchy. Those gigantic and magnificent monuments, still standing as witnesses upon the soil, those distant expeditions to subjugate foreign nations, and the victorious results of which are sculptured in stone, bear manifest

testimony to the fact, that the chief or ruler was surrounded by a large number of official persons, entrusted with extensive command, ready and able to second his wishes and execute his sovereign mandates.

Egypt then appears, in those remote ages, to have been capable of internal self-government, although she also accepted the services of strangers, like Joseph ; and consequently the want of men of capacity, in the secondary ranks, which is at the present day the great misfortune of the country, is not absolutely endemic, nor, it may be hoped, utterly incurable. Nevertheless the evil is so deep-seated, that to eradicate it will be a task of great difficulty. Egypt has been in a state of servitude for nearly thirty centuries, and we must look back four thousand years to form any idea of her original state. The Shepherds first invaded the country, afterwards the Persians, Greeks, Romans, Arabs, and Turks. Egypt has, under the family of Mehemet Ali, recovered her external freedom by her own effort, but without as yet acquiring, or even pretending to, complete independence ; and a new destiny has opened upon her under the present dynasty, which is not the less national because sprung from a foreign country.

The necessary tendency of the Egyptian Government will be to get rid as much as possible of the Turkish race, without relinquishing the political and

religious ties which connect it with the Porte, and with the Chief of Islamism. This tendency inevitably arises out of its position, a fact which the Turks themselves readily understand and admit. On the other hand, the Egyptians do not reject those of the Turks who wish to devote themselves to the service of the country, and to identify their interests with hers. So far from it, a great many Turks continue to fill the highest civil and military offices. But it is natural that there should be little desire to have or to retain those in the country who merely come to enrich themselves, and then leave it as soon as possible, laden with their spoils. The difficulty is to replace them, with the unassisted resources of Egypt.

If the Viceroy, with the intelligence and energy which distinguish him, succeeds in creating a school of men, which may furnish an honest and efficient race of Sheiks-el-beled, he will have accomplished a great work, for the happiness and welfare of the Fellahs. But his task is a rough and arduous one, and all who can appreciate its difficulty must ardently wish him success. For a long time past he has been desirous that all the sons of the Sheiks should pass through the military service, that he might thus learn to know them individually, and offer encouragement by conferring distinctions upon the ablest. The Sheiks, partly from paternal indulgence and partly from cu-

pidity, have resisted this just and useful measure, and the Viceroy has not yet been able to overcome their opposition ; but I doubt not that he will eventually succeed, in a struggle which has for its object the welfare of the country.

## LETTER VIII.

## THE PYRAMIDS AND DENDERAH.

Encampment of Chalonf-et-Tarraba, Dec. 21st, 1855.

I CANNOT quit Egypt without giving some account of the monuments we have just been admiring. A traveller must indeed be insensible who could witness these marvellous structures unmoved, or without carrying away a lasting reminiscence of his impressions; nor may it perhaps be an unprofitable employment, to communicate such impressions to those less fortunate than himself, who have not visited these spots. The monuments of Egypt, moreover, are not merely a glory to the people who raised them; they form part of the history of art, from their originality, their grandeur, sometimes from their perfection; and to pass them by unnoticed, would be to efface one page from the annals of the human mind. Some of these works have existed for more than four thousand

years. Let us only consider, in what state the entire continent of Europe, Greece included, was at that remote period,—nay, the world at large, including the most civilized nations of those semi-fabulous times, compared with Egypt under the Pharaohs!

I do not pretend, as I have before said, to understand or interpret the hieroglyphics, nor have I made any new discovery; my acquaintance with these enigmas, sculptured on the walls of palaces and temples, is derived from the writings and researches of the younger Champollion, Wilkinson, De Rougé, Prisse, Lepsius, Mariette, and other Egyptian historiographers. The discoveries made by Champollion are not disputed, and I rely on the interpretations of the learned, whose labours I do not pretend to criticize.

We have not visited many of these monuments: our expedition had a special object, and the question relating to the Isthmus of Suez properly engaged our chief attention. Nevertheless it was impossible to pass unnoticed, with barbarian indifference, these splendid remains of Pharaonic architecture. The monuments we visited on the banks of the Nile are, the Pyramids of Ghizeh, the Temple of Denderah, the palaces and temples of Thebes, on both banks of the river, Esneh, Edfou, and the Isle of Philæ.

I pass over the Arabian remains we saw at Cairo and its environs: there are many mosques, which

invite the study and admiration of artists. Outside the city, the tombs of the Khalifs, or rather of the Mameluke Sultans (among whom figures the name of Malek Adel), are very curious, uniting elegance with strength. But this is quite another world,—one of yesterday,—not such as we look for on the soil of Egypt.

To reach the great Pyramids, which are seen on the right from the summit of the citadel of Cairo, the traveller crosses the Nile, and proceeds by the village of Ghizeh, now in ruins, which Leo Africanus, early in the sixth century, represents as a flourishing town. The inundation being still high, and covering the country, we were obliged to proceed along the embankment, which leads, by a long circuitous route, to the borders of the Libyan Desert, where stand these gigantic structures. Seen from a distance, and on approaching them, they produce little effect, and one feels something like disappointment; but on leaving the embankment, and proceeding on foot beyond the limits of the inundation, walking for about half a mile in the sand, with the Pyramids straight before you, they enlarge into colossal proportions; and on arriving at their base, the spectator is overpowered with amazement. This impression is clearly attributable to the fact of these wonderful monuments consisting of a single mass, which concentrates their effect.

Palaces of still vaster extent, as for example those of Karnac and Medinet Habou, fail to produce the same overpowering effect as the Pyramids. In the former the traveller can find his way, and examine them at his leisure: but in the Pyramids, on the contrary, the effect upon him is single, concentrated, and he gazes in mute amazement. Nor does this surprise diminish, when he mounts their courses of magnificent masonry, some of them steps three or four feet high. The Colosseum at Rome may be more beautiful than the Pyramids, but I doubt whether it produces a more forcible impression upon the mind of the spectator.

At the summit, five hundred feet above the ground, with Cairo in view, its citadel, and the Mokattan overhanging it, the Nile overflowing the country, the Pyramids of Sakkarah on the horizon, with Memphis and the Libyan desert, and the three or four smaller pyramids scattered around the great one, the Sphinx and the ruins of numerous palaces and tombs, the effect is undiminished; and on a sudden the spectator appears transported into a superhuman world. The contemplation of all this scene ceases, but the astonishment cannot soon pass away.

With the assistance of a vigorous Arab, and accompanied by a pretty little boy, who was not robust enough to follow our steps at a rapid pace, I climbed to the summit in less than ten minutes; I descended



still more rapidly, sometimes hurrying along my Arab guide with precipitous leaps. The whole time, both in ascending and descending, the fellow kept incessantly begging for the bakshish I had promised him, and with all the clamorous importunity of a big child, he insisted on my letting him perform the exploit of going up and down again in ten minutes, demanding only the modest sum of three shillings for this *course diabolique*. I had no desire to treat myself to such a spectacle, but left him to perform this feat for the gratification of British curiosity. I feared his breaking his neck, notwithstanding his agility, and remained inexorable to his urgent entreaties. He was no loser by my refusal ; but it was a matter of conscience with me, not to let the man risk his life in such a foolish exploit. We breakfasted at the foot of the Great Pyramid, and sitting there in its shadow, we drank—Oh the vicissitudes of human affairs !—to the memory of the Pharaohs, in champagne !

The accurate description given by Herodotus, who visited this spot five centuries before the Christian era, leaves no doubt that the Great Pyramid was at that time faced with polished stones, the smallest of which, he says, was thirty feet in length. Having myself measured stones at Medinet Habou thirty-five feet long, I do not doubt this assertion ; but all trace of this coating has undoubtedly long ago disappeared.

These magnificent stones have apparently been carried off by sacrilegious hands, to be applied to other uses, and they may perhaps have served as the ready-prepared ornament of some other buildings erected at little cost.

The second Pyramid, which is smaller than the great one, has still near its summit a peculiar facing of granite: the other is believed to have been of marble. As this coating is at the top, at least 250 feet above the ground, suspended and retained on an incline, it is clear that the missing part has been taken away by unskilful depredators; for it is precisely the lower portion which would have remained intact, had it been ravaged by no other hand than that of time. Seeing the second Pyramid thus stript up to one-half of its height, it seems almost reasonable to infer that the whole of the Great Pyramid was once coated, and in the course of time pillaged by more daring and more persevering robbers.

No one therefore, even in gazing on the Pyramids, can probably form any correct idea of what they once were, their perfectly smooth surface glittering in the bright sun, which shone down upon them from a cloudless sky.

We did not take the measurement of the Great Pyramid, which is rendered difficult by the state of the surrounding ground. The dimensions given by

the ancients, and those stated by the most accurate modern observers, differ materially, according to the level from whence they have been taken, the scientific skill of those who measured, and the nature of their instruments. I rely on the recent calculations given by Colonel Vyse, whose discoveries have gained him reputation and authority in these matters. According to his estimates, reduced into French measures, the base of the Great Pyramid on each side must be in round figures 720 feet ; the vertical height is 450 feet, and 550 on a lateral incline of  $51^{\circ} 50'$ .

The reader may judge, from this statement, of the enormous mass which these dimensions multiplied into one another give. There are no less than 203 courses of masonry superposed one upon another in the line of inclination ; and it is a singular fact, that these courses are not all of the same thickness. It would seem that, in a structure of such mathematical regularity, all the stones should be identically of the same size. To have accomplished this would, I imagine, not have been difficult, but probably it was not thought of. The grain of the limestone used is faultless, and, from its present appearance, it cannot have been very hard to cut.

The Pyramids of Ghizeh are not the most ancient ; those of Dahshour, Sakkarah, and Abourosh being much older, and dating back to the third dynasty ;

whereas the Pyramids of Ghizeh, according to Champollion, belong to the fifth. The highest appears to have been constructed by Cheops, and cannot possibly be referred to a later date than two thousand years before Christ, although neither the Bible nor Homer mention the Pyramids. The learned and accurate traveller, Sir Gardner Wilkinson, assigns to Suphis, or Saophis, the Cheops of the Greeks, the date of 2123 years before Christ, the period when the Great Pyramid was raised, the second and third being built at intervals of nearly forty years. This was also the epoch when the first Assyrian Empire was founded under the Nimrod of the Bible. The history of Greece is a blank in these almost unknown times, and it was not until at least five or six centuries later, that the first kingdom of Argos was established.

The second Pyramid was erected by Cephren, brother of Cheops, and the third by Mencheris, son of Cheops, the Mycerinus of the Greeks. The rest were the work of other and obscurer Pharaohs.

One fact is certain, although very extraordinary, that the Pyramids cannot have been constructed without the aid of immense inclined planes, up which the stones were rolled, in the same manner as we saw, in 1836, the Obelisk of Luxor slide up the plane prepared for it, until it stood erect, after immense efforts, upon its pedestal in the Place de la Concorde ;

only that the Egyptian causeways, by which the stones were brought to the spot, instead of being three or four hundred feet, were a mile in length.

Herodotus, a very accurate narrator, and Diodorus Siculus, mention these auxiliary causeways, and vestiges of them are still visible. Sir Gardner Wilkinson has traced that of the Great Pyramid, in a straight line for above 1424 feet; and he is of opinion that it can scarcely have been less than eighty-five feet high. That of the third Pyramid is now the most visible. But it appears that, after the completion of the principal work, the traces of these secondary works which had assisted in the labours were effaced. Diodorus indeed remarks this fact, and mentions it in metaphorical language, representing it as the work of some deity, an effort of superhuman power; as it was impossible to see by what means the hand of man could have raised them.

These causeways, although of a secondary nature, must have been considerable works; that of the Great Pyramid alone was the labour of ten years, and was similarly faced with polished stones, upon which were sculptured "figures of animals," that is to say, hieroglyphics. The causeway of the Pyramid of Abourosh is believed to have been five thousand feet long,—only a third the length of the inclined plane of the Great Pyramid, to which I return.

According to the tradition repeated by Herodotus, and after him by Diodorus, Pliny, and many others, it appears that Cheops devoted nearly thirty years to its construction, employing hundreds of thousands of workmen at a time, who were relieved every three months by immense bodies of fresh labourers. There is nothing incredible in this assertion; and when, in addition to these works upon the spot, we consider those in the granite and limestone quarries,—the former at least situated at a very great distance,—the tradition of the Greek historian is perfectly credible. But he goes further, and infers, from a hieroglyphical inscription which must have been interpreted to him, that the food alone of the workmen, consisting of onions and other vegetables, must have represented a sum equivalent to five million francs of our money. Men cannot live, however, on vegetables alone, even in Egypt, especially when they are employed in quarrying stones like those of the Pyramids; and we may judge, from this single article, what must have been the entire cost.

The able English engineer, Mr. M'Clean, who accompanied us, amused himself with calculating the cubic measure of the stones which form the entire mass; and he asserted that, at the present day, with all the means at our disposal, one as large might be constructed for twenty-five million francs. Whether this

calculation be exact or not, it is certain that, in an age when mechanical science was so backward, and all kinds of labour were performed by human strength, the cost must have been infinitely greater than now ; although manual labour was then, as it still is in Egypt, regarded as of scarcely any value. This would be a very simple calculation, the only hypothetical element being that of the transport. If the limestone came from Mokattan, the granite, porphyry, marble and syenite were brought from a distance of two hundred leagues further, from Selseleh in Upper Egypt, or from Sinai ; and it would be difficult to compute, even approximately, the cost of such transport.

Tradition, confirmed by the recent discoveries of Colonel Vyse, leaves scarcely any doubt that these sublime monuments were the tombs of kings. A multitude of hypotheses, more or less ingenious and strange, have been formed respecting the purposes of their erection, but the one just mentioned is far the most probable. Since the discovery of the entrance, by Colonel Vyse and Belzoni, the descent is open to the chamber where the sarcophagi must have been placed, in the Great Pyramid as well as in the others. Many of the sarcophagi which have been found bear inscriptions sufficiently precise to remove any doubt respecting them. The Pyramids are merely sepulchres, but only Pharaohs could have sepulchres of

such a magnitude. The very word Pyramid signifies in Greek simply a tomb, derived from the custom of the Greeks of burning their dead.

We were unable to examine the interior of the Great Pyramid; and our curiosity, which was enhanced by the sight of the opening at about fifty feet from the ground, remained ungratified: we had neglected to provide ourselves with lights, to penetrate into the depths of the monument; and the Arabs, whose business it is to show it to travellers, had been equally thoughtless. We vented our disappointment in blaming them; but there was no help for it, and we departed without visiting the king's and queen's chambers, which are covered with a beautiful granite, in the centre of the mass of limestone by which they are surrounded. Our negligence may be a caution to future travellers.

Being thus prevented exploring the interior of the Great Pyramid, we examined another unfinished one, which Colonel Vyse likewise discovered by clearing away the sand in which it was buried; this he named Campbell's Tomb, in honour of the English Consul, who aided him in his labours. The following is a description of it.

An immense hole, thirty feet square, and seventy deep, is cut perpendicularly in the rock, concentrically to another, sixty-five feet, which is separated from the



first by a perpendicular fosse, fifty feet deep and eight or ten feet wide. The arrangement resembles two square boxes, one within the other, an equal space being left between the two on each side. The external sides of the first hole are connected at intervals with the internal walls of the second, by buttresses, which are simply the stone left in its original state, and not cut away like the rest.

At the bottom, and in the centre, of the first hole, is a beautiful open sarcophagus, apparently of granite; and the sides of the immense excavation contain niches destined to receive other sarcophagi, to be placed with that of the Pharaoh.

The descent into this huge well or open quarry is very dangerous, and is effected by cords, held firmly above: none of our party attempted to go down. In passing from the outer square to the inner, and leaping over the fosse which separates them, you are assisted by the Arabs, who carry or support you; but no one with any tendency to giddiness should venture over this narrow passage. The Arabs leap across it without any difficulty, but in taking too great a spring, there is a danger of being precipitated into the chasm.

Campbell's Tomb, which I have here described, is evidently the bottom of a pyramid left unfinished,—it affords a complete plan of the interior, and the sub-

terranean works of the others. These were executed in the living stone, which is found in this part of the country, forming the last spur of the Libyan chain, and extending nearly to the banks of the Nile. Thus we see the structure of the Pyramids exhibits subterranean labours as great as those aboveground, and our wonder is doubled. I am convinced that the two chambers which Colonel Vyse has discovered in the Great Pyramid are not the only ones, and that fresh researches will disclose others. It seems highly probable that the tombs of the queen and king were not alone, but were accompanied by the tombs of their relatives, and other great personages, deposited in niches similar to those I have mentioned.

I will venture to offer another conjecture. Herodotus says that the water of the Nile was led by a subterranean aqueduct to the royal tomb, and surrounded it. This was doubtless to protect it against sacrilegious injury or spoliation. No evidence, it is true, has yet been found to confirm this account: in all the excavations which have been made, there is no trace of the subterranean canal by which the water is said to have been conducted. In my opinion, however, it is not impossible that the fosse which separates the outer square from the inner may have been destined to receive the water; and this hypothesis, in connection with the tradition which the Greek histo-

rian has handed down to us, amounts, I think, to nearly a certainty. But leaving the ground of conjecture, let me continue my narrative.

To the west of the Great Pyramid, and north of the second, are immense remains, which seem to indicate the site of tombs, equally numerous and vast. These are large parallelograms, ranged symmetrically one by another, of which scarcely anything but the foundations remains, all vestige aboveground having been effaced. We entered some subterranean chambers, and in a small one, into which we were obliged to creep in the dark on our knees, or lying flat upon the ground, the walls were covered with the most delicate and elegant hieroglyphics we had yet seen : I would defy modern skill to execute anything more beautiful. The floor was covered with the fine sand which the wind of the desert had wafted into it ; and the chamber was lighted by a sort of chimney, up which we climbed to reach the open air again.

At a distance of five or six hundred paces south of the Great Pyramid, in the direction of Memphis, stands the Sphinx, facing the Nile. It is in part mutilated ; but in the time of Pliny, who measured it, the figure was no less than sixty feet in height ; and, in its couchant position, it is more than 140 feet long. It is chiefly cut out of the rock, which is found in this country, as for instance under the Pyramids and

Campbell's Tomb. The upper portions are formed of stone brought from a distance. The head alone is twenty-seven feet high ; it is very difficult to scale it, and one of our party, who attempted this perilous exploit with the aid of an Arab, was soon obliged to relinquish it : we were content with gazing at it from below.

Until the year 1815, the Sphinx remained half-buried in the sand, which had for ages accumulated around it, and out of which it rose only about forty feet. Mr. Salt, an Englishman, and M. Caviglia, an Italian, were the first who cleared this gigantic statue ; and they were repaid for their labour by the discovery of a temple beneath it, which was reached by a flight of steps between the fore legs. The sand has since again buried this opening, but the more recent researches of our countryman, M. Mariette, have led to other discoveries ; among which is a colossal statue of Osiris, composed of twenty-eight pieces emblematical of those into which, according to the Egyptian fable, the body of the god was divided. It is probable that persevering attempts at excavation will lead to the discovery of new treasures, but these labours are very difficult and costly. What then were the difficulties and the cost of the original work !

It appears certain that the Sphinx was an idol, and the ruins discovered around and especially in

front of it, all tend to confirm the belief that sacrifices were offered to it. According to the hieroglyphical inscriptions, this monument must date at least as far back as Thothmosis IV., that is to say, 1450 years before the Christian era; and as there is nothing to indicate that he erected it, we may reasonably presume that the Sphinx was nearly contemporaneous with the Pyramids. Its dimensions are also in harmony with them; and when kings had tombs of such magnitude, the gods would surely have effigies equally colossal.

It appears strange to the students of Egyptian antiquities that the Sphinx should be a symbol of divinity. Usually it is only an emblem of regal power, and intended to recall the memory of a man, not that of a god. I shall not enter into this question, but limit myself to some general reflections on the Pyramids.

The present aspect of the Pyramids attests the great advance which architecture had made at the remote period of their construction. However imperfect the means employed (sufficiently shown in the inclined planes), the art was certainly not in its infancy. The construction in itself, with its regular lines, its solidity, compactness, and finish both internal and external, leave nothing to be desired; no potentate could at the present day attempt, with any chance of equal

success, to erect such edifices. Every architect, however great his scientific attainments, will admit the truth of this remark. In those remote and semi-fabulous times, although mechanical science may have been comparatively in its infancy, architecture had already made wonderful progress; and, as no art has ever been developed very rapidly, long and repeated attempts and experiments must have been required before it could attain such a high degree of excellence. The consideration of this fact leads us to refer the dawn of Egyptian civilization to a period which baffles our power of calculation, as much as it raises our astonishment; in what remote age of the world's history must we imagine that men began to hew stone and erect edifices, for such perfection to be attained two thousand years before the Christian era?

So far our admiration; in another point of view it is impossible to express the grief and indignation which these monuments must excite, when we consider the reckless cruelty, the empty ostentation, in which they originated—the immense sacrifice of human life demanded, for the mere purpose of erecting for a dead body, destined by nature to perish, a sepulchre intended to defy the attacks of time, but which was unable to preserve its contents from inevitable decay or sacrilegious spoliation. Pliny expressed these sentiments, when, eighteen centuries ago, he rejoiced that

the very names of these proud and barbarous kings had perished, and that they had not even obtained glory as the reward of their detestable vanity. We at the present day are better informed than Pliny, and know the names of at least some of the founders; and we cannot surely hold their memory in less contempt, or feel less pity for the people who were the victims of their despotic tyranny. Egypt, notwithstanding her early enlightenment and power, has never been a land of liberty; nor does it appear that the nation has ever been very sensible of its misery and servitude. A tradition is preserved among the Arabs and Fellahs, which sufficiently shows the implacable hatred cherished through generations by a people who have been subjected to such sufferings. When a Fellah wishes to apply the most contemptuous epithet to any one, to convey the greatest insult, he calls him Son of Pharaoh—"Ebn Faraoun." This, the brief but expressive epitaph of all the Egyptian monarchs, is their eternal malediction!

Such was the state of architecture in Egypt four thousand years ago, and such must also have been that of Memphis, which, although only a few leagues distant, we had not time to visit, notwithstanding our great desire to witness the admirable labours of M. Mariette, in these ruins, which have almost disappeared.

After viewing this phase of Egyptian art,—one of the most ancient, if not the first,—we passed almost immediately to its latest form, in Denderah, the Tentyris of the Greeks, in Coptic Tentoré, the city of Athor, the Egyptian Venus. The Temple of Denderah was built by the last of the Ptolemies, and only finished under the Roman emperors. The most ancient name found here is that of Cæsarion, the son of Cleopatra and Cæsar; and, of a later date, those of Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, Nero, and even Antoninus. A Greek inscription on the cornice, deciphered by the ingenious Letronne, leaves no doubt respecting this monument. The Temple of Denderah is certainly not more than eighteen hundred years old, as Visconti first conjectured.

The reader will remember the controversy occasioned by the famous Zodiac, discovered in this temple, and which at present occupies an obscure place in one of the lower halls of the Imperial Library in Paris. It was at first imagined that this Zodiac represented the aspect of the heavens five, six, or even ten thousand years ago. A multitude of inferences were drawn from this hypothesis, each more certain and weighty than the rest. The partisans of the *Origine des Cultes* triumphed, and this unexceptionable evidence fully confirmed their views. The mistake was rendered ridiculous enough, when it was proved that this pretended



Egyptian Zodiac, supposed to be anterior to the Deluge, was only a poor astronomical work of the first century of our era, attributable to some ignorant Greek or Roman artist.

Nevertheless the Temple of Denderah is a masterpiece of Egyptian architecture. According to those learned in Egyptian history, Champollion at their head, the sculptures with which it is covered are detestable, and exhibit the decline of art ; but, while passing this opinion on the bas-reliefs, it is impossible not to admire the construction of the edifice, in which elegance is combined with strength ; I have seen grander objects in Egypt, but none more graceful or elegant. Champollion was of the same opinion, and remarked, that its dimensions may be stated, but to give an idea of it is impossible.

Our boat proceeded on its voyage all night, and at about three o'clock in the morning we were moored off Kenh, on the right bank of the river. At five o'clock we crossed over to the left bank, to visit some ruins a league and a half distant ; and in two hours came to a propylæum, of magnificent dimensions, south-east of the town,—possibly one of its gates. The summit, in the form of a square basket inverted, is in excellent taste, and its proportions are in perfect harmony. The effect of its grandeur and lightness combined is striking, at once simple and majestic.

The stones, of an enormous size, are of a very fine sandstone, and covered with hieroglyphics. A second propylæum, similar to the first, except that it is placed in a contrary direction, stands at a short distance. They are both surrounded and choked with ruins, which show that they were not isolated edifices, nor left unfinished, as has been imagined. These are ruins of less solid monuments, which have yielded more quickly than the rest to the action of time and the violence of man.

We approached the Temple, five hundred paces distant, on the west side, from behind. The façade is at least 130 feet long and 60 high, covered with bas-reliefs, almost all representing Cleopatra with her son Cæsarion, in various attitudes, answering to different passages in the life of the queen. These portraits, as Sir Gardner Wilkinson remarks, are of her own time; but he doubts, perhaps justly, whether the artist who executed them ever saw the features he had to represent; and, in his opinion, these figures give no very high idea of the celebrated beauty of Cleopatra. He might have added, that, as Egyptian art has never studied to imitate nature, it is not surprising that it has failed to reproduce the likeness of the human features. In another Letter I shall revert to this subject.

On the west, as well as the north and south sides of this Temple, there are figures of lions, projecting

at half-length, on pedestals which support them. In these sculptures we perceive something not Egyptian, and revealing the influence of Greek art; but they are not the less beautiful, and harmonize with the rest of the edifice.

We entered the temple by a side gate, facing the north, and were at once surprised by a faery-like spectacle. We were standing under a colossal portico, supported by twenty-four columns, about twenty-five feet in circumference, and forty feet high. The capitals of each column were ornamented, on the four sides, with the heads of women, with heifers' ears and veils hanging in bands from their neck. The acanthus-leaves of the Greeks may have been a finer ornament; but these female heads, all precisely alike, and recalling probably some mythological incident in the legend of Athor, certainly produced a magical effect of calm repose and gravity. We stood gazing with admiration at these sculptures, even more imposing than strange, and at the ceiling, which still glittered in many places with the colours which originally adorned it.

To judge better of the effect of the temple, we sought a favourable point of view outside, whence the eye could take in the beautiful *ensemble*; but this was not easy. The floor of the temple is at least twenty feet below the ground about it, and we had

to ascend a flight of steps, recently erected. We then walked through a brick avenue, constructed in the time of Mehemet Ali, up to the pylon, which once marked the beginning of the *dromos* leading to the temple. At this distance the upper part of the edifice, half buried in the ground, was alone visible. We had gained nothing, and descended again the same way into the temple.

Passing on from the portico, we came to two halls, supported like the first upon columns, a vestibule, and then a sanctuary, which is isolated in the centre of the edifice by passages at right angles. It is thirty-two feet long, about twenty wide and twenty high. It was entered on a level by gates, which have long ago been carried off by depredators. On each side of the sanctuary, and opening into the passages, are three chambers or halls, which must evidently have served for the various offices of worship.

Beside these six chambers, placed symmetrically opposite to one another, there are a great many others, equally regular, which were doubtless intended for the same purposes. We passed through most of these, lighted by our tapers, which were not forgotten this time: in all, without exception, the walls were covered with sculptures and hieroglyphics. To enter some of them, we had to glide and creep along the passages, which were hardly the size of our bodies. In the

deepest ones we perceived a peculiar smell, not fetid, but very disagreeable, which we attributed to the remains of mummies. It arose perhaps partly from the bats, which swarm in these dark places, clustering against the walls: occasionally they extinguished our tapers with their wings, or brushed against our faces. Numerous other animals, jackals and hyænas, also find a retreat in these ruins; and it was all these odours combined that we perceived.

Ascending by a flight of steps within the temple, we came to a large terrace, on which were various buildings of widely different periods,—a kind of chapel, of tolerably pure Greek style,—Arab houses, long in ruins, their bricks covering this superb place, which commanded a magnificent view of the Nile and the Desert. Adjoining the terrace were some rooms, the descent to which was dangerous; they contained numerous hieroglyphics, as beautiful as those below.

On this terrace we were able to observe more clearly the details of the construction, among which I was struck with some stones of great beauty, all, like the entire temple, of fine compact sandstone, but not very hard on their surface. This is the material of which the principal palaces and temples we have seen are built. Granite and porphyry, in all their varieties, were reserved for the colossi, sphinxes, statues, and certain details on which more labour was bestowed.

This stone comes from Selseleh, in Upper Egypt, near Assouan, a distance of at least sixty leagues,—a difficulty which must be taken into account, to appreciate fully the value of these monuments. Let the reader imagine the labour required to sculpture all this stone ; there is not a square foot of space on the temple, internally or externally, without hieroglyphics or bas-reliefs : columns, outer and inner walls, flagstones and chambers, portico and sanctuary, all are literally covered with them. These were the annals, or more properly the official books, of Egypt, beside those inscribed on papyrus, which was used in equally remote times. What artists, what steady and skilful hands, must have been required for these delicate and erudite works ! At the present day, even in Paris, decorators of ability are very rare ; our private houses, as well as palaces, are necessarily so arranged as to dispense with much ornament, for which competent artists would not be found. Such reflections, however, will be more in place when I speak of Thebes, where we shall arrive this evening,—Thebes, the ancient and opulent capital of the Pharaohs, the forerunner perhaps of Memphis, which is comparatively of recent date.

One sight produces a melancholy impression on the spectator at Denderah,—all the heads in the bas-reliefs, large and small, are frightfully bruised and mutilated. This cannot be attributable to the vengeance

of the Persians, on their conquest of Egypt, as Denderah was not built until seven or eight centuries after that period. It is the no less ferocious intolerance of the Mohammedan Arabs, that apparently led to the lamentable mutilation of these charming works. Not a single figure has escaped, with the exception of those in two or three of the deepest chambers, which the hammer of the spoiler has not reached. Even the beauty of Cleopatra was not respected by these barbarians, and not one of her thousand portraits was secure from the dishonour inflicted by the blind fanaticism of these followers of the Koran. In the few places which did escape this reckless treatment, the features exhibit an astonishing delicacy ; and, notwithstanding their condemnation by the connoisseurs of Egyptian art, I cannot but express the great admiration I felt in studying them, and only wish it may be my good fortune to contemplate them again.

At the distance of a hundred paces on the right, and north of the great Temple, are the remains of another smaller edifice, yet sufficiently large to have a peristyle supported by twenty-two columns, almost as tall as those of the Temple of Athor. It appears to have been simply an annex to the principal edifice, dedicated to the son of Athor, as the temple had been to his mother.

This second temple, which would likewise well merit inspection, is almost entirely buried in the ground, and the original erection can only be reconstructed in imagination.

There were many other ruins, which we should have been anxious to visit,—remains of temples, half supported by dilapidated columns, and vast enclosures, marked by accumulations of sun-dried bricks, and forming enormous elevations on the ground ; but time did not permit this, and we were obliged to force ourselves away with regret from these ruined palaces, which still preserve in their decay so much nobleness, beauty, and character.

Without the trouble of much search, we found a great many coins, quite oxidized. Our guides, or rather the Arabs who followed us from idleness, offered us a quantity of these coins, which they had collected on their continual wanderings in these solitudes. Without doubt, a well-directed search and digging would lead to the discovery of a multitude of objects, among which would be some of rarity and importance. The Egyptians, Romans, and Arabs of the conquest, successively inhabited these plains and temples. Immense heaps of rubbish, and ruins of unburnt bricks, cover the terrace of the great temple, burying entire monuments, which might be cleared with the requisite labour.



We must leave Denderah, beautiful as it is, for Thebes, which was doubtless unequalled in its time, and which nothing in our age can exceed in solemn majesty and melancholy grandeur.

Our boat arrived at Thebes in the evening, and at about seven o'clock we were moored to the quay of Luxor.

## LETTER IX.

## THEBES AND PHILÆ.

Encampment on the Bitter Lakes, Dec. 22, 1855.

IF I felt a difficulty in speaking of the Pyramids of Denderah in becoming terms, this is much increased in speaking of Thebes. The Pyramids are only isolated monuments; Denderah is little more than a single temple. The ruins of Thebes are those of an entire and superb city, which in the time of Homer was said to have a hundred gates. At that remote period, more than a thousand years before the Christian era,—its fame had already crossed the seas, and penetrated, doubtless in the footsteps of conquest, to the distant peoples of Asia Minor, who could at that time only have known it by name. I am not surprised at this wide-spread fame; and, from what I have seen upon the spot, still standing and lying scattered on the ground, I believe that, illustrious as she was con-

sidered, Thebes was very far from receiving her full meed of glory.

The present ruins of Thebes, that eldest of royal cities, to use the expression of Champollion, stretch along both banks of the river; and, from the extent we traversed in two days, I can scarcely estimate their circumference at less than five or six leagues. On the right bank of the Nile lie Luxor and Karnac; on the left, in the direction of the Libyan Desert, is Gournah or the Ramesseion; there lies the royal necropolis of Biban-el-Molouk; the Memnonium, with its colossi, and lastly Medinet Habou. I have not seen Baalbec and Palmyra; but these cities are of recent date as compared with the antiquity of Thebes; and their ruins, however vast, are, judging by the descriptions of the most enthusiastic travellers, very far from being so vast as hers. How are the thoughts carried back into the unfathomable depths of time and history! For more than twenty-five centuries Thebes has lain in ruins. At what epoch was this city founded? At what age did she attain the height of her glory and power?

I have mentioned these prodigious ruins in the order in which we visited them. The learned writer Sir Gardner Wilkinson advises all travellers to follow a route the reverse of that we took,—to start on the left bank, and finish at Luxor and Karnac; this route

is in wise conformity with the words *crescit eundo*, for the traveller, as he proceeds, meets with remains of increasing interest and grandeur. Here the objects however are equally astonishing, although differing greatly according to the point of view ; and the tombs of Biban-el-Molouk are, of their kind, equal to the temples of Luxor. Medinet Habou is scarcely less astonishing than Karnac itself ; and, although we have reversed the order prescribed by the lovers of Pharaonic Egypt, I do not think we have lost anything of this marvellous spectacle.

I commence then with the right bank of the Nile, and shall speak of Luxor, the first part of Thebes which we visited.

The name of Luxor signifies, as it appears, in the hieroglyphic language, *the Palaces* ; and, as Luxor was in former times connected with Karnac by avenues, traces of which are still visible, it is probable that this general designation should be applied to the whole right bank of the Nile. At the present day it is limited to the temples and structures found at a short distance from the river, which inundates them when the waters are at their height ; they are very ill protected by an old quay constructed under the Ptolemies and the Romans.

Luxor, in its present dilapidated state, is composed of two distinct parts. To the south, or right, ap-

proaching it from the Nile, is a series of palaces, the date of which is shown by incontestable inscriptions, to belong to the time of the Pharaoh of the eighteenth Theban dynasty, Amunoph III. or Amenophis, who reigned about 1430 B.C. There are more than a hundred columns still standing, which evidently belong to different parts of the same edifice: some are forty-five feet high, and nine or ten in diameter. Some exhibit a fanciful peculiarity, swelling out perceptibly with an entasis at the top, but without injuring the effect. The capital, formed of lotus-leaves, is smaller than the shaft. A sanctuary covered with elegant hieroglyphics commemorates the birth of the Pharaoh, and on the walls are represented the principal scenes of the accouchement of the queen his mother. A smaller sanctuary is enclosed in the large one.

All these buildings have a remarkable air of grandeur and antiquity; but they are unfortunately choked up and half concealed by the houses of the present village of Luxor. These hovels of sun-dried bricks are not only placed at the foot of the edifices which they deface, but often also on the top of the most beautiful structures; and thus our sailors, when they came to fetch the Obelisk now standing in the Place de la Concorde, built their house of clay, between two walls of the temple, forty feet from the ground. Our soldiers, the remembrance of whom still lives among

the people here, did the same in 1798. It is therefore difficult to judge of the effect and beauty of Luxor, and more is left to the imagination than is presented to the eye.

Such is the first part of Luxor, on the right : on the left, in the direction of Karnac, the view is not less grand nor more complete. Here, in like manner, are only disconnected ruins, buried amid hovels. It consists of an enormous *pylon*, or gateway, with pyramidal towers on the two sides, and a gigantic opening which forms the entrance. The façade of the pylon is two hundred feet long, and sixty high, although much of it is buried in the ground. The door must have been nearly of the same height. The façades of the propylæum are covered with bas-reliefs, which Champollion says are of a very good style ; they represent only warlike subjects,—a camp, with its tents and waggons, an army in battle-array, with its chariots and infantry ; a battle, a defeat of the enemy, who are closely pursued, the passage of a river where they are massacred, the taking of a city, and lastly the submission of the conquered, who yield themselves prisoners to the victor.

Such is the subject of these two great bas-reliefs, fifty feet long. Champollion the Younger deciphered the inscriptions, and discovered that this victorious king, whose glory is immortalized by the pylon of

Luxor, is Rameses II., surnamed the Great, son of Pharaoh Osiri, Se-Osiri, the Sesostris of the Greeks, who reigned about a century after Amenophis ; that is to say in the fourteenth century before our era. The vanquished peoples, whose names are given in the inscriptions, are all Asiatics of Mesopotamia, perhaps from the shores of the Indus. It is therefore an ascertained fact, that the expeditions of the great Sesostris extended to these remote countries, which gives a high idea of the Egyptian power at that time. These conquests of the famous monarch are reproduced more than once in similar monuments, both in Thebes itself, on the other bank of the river, and in Nubia, in the hypogean temples of Ipsamboul.

In front of this pylon of Rameses the Great were found the two magnificent obelisks so often mentioned. One has been removed to Paris, thanks to the munificence of Mehemet Ali. The other, which he gave to England, has remained in its place, and will probably never be removed. The latter, which is the larger, is above eighty feet high, and six feet six inches wide at the base. The obelisk at Paris is only seventy-seven feet high, and seven feet nine inches at the base : it possesses however the greater historical interest. Our English companions, Mr. Senior and Mr. M'Clean, expressed their regret that England was unwilling to incur the cost of removing the obelisk presented to her.

These obelisks, of rose-coloured granite, taken from the quarries of Selseleh or Assouan, were both erected in honour of Ammon by the great Sesostris. The dedication, which the hieroglyphics upon them express, is conceived in the following terms, according to Champollion's translation :—" The Lord of the world, Sun, guardian of justice, approved by Phre, has caused to be executed this edifice in honour of his father Ammon Ra ; and he has erected to him these two great stone obelisks before the Ramesseion of the city of Ammon." Similar notices are found upon the pylon itself ; and there can be no doubt that all this part of Luxor was the work either of the great Sesostris, or of Rameses II.

It was probably this great king who was represented in person by two colossi forty feet high placed against the pylon. These two statues of red granite, and monoliths like the obelisks, are half buried in the sand and ruins. They are completely mutilated ; but there are still traces on their broken heads of the royal insignia of the *pshent* and the collar. The breadth between the shoulders exceeds thirteen feet.

We climbed from stone to stone, not without danger, to the top of the pylon ; and, looking down thence upon Luxor, endeavoured to trace the plan of the structure ; but all we could ascertain with certainty was, that the axis of the pylon which we had climbed



does not at all correspond to the grand colonnade of the palace of Amenophis. The want of parallelism offends the eye; but we remembered that our own sovereigns did not display more skill in the erection of the Louvre and the Tuileries. This is a strange inadvertence, which cannot be excused by the fact that the two Egyptian edifices are attributable to different kings. Doubtless the fault was concealed from the eye of those who committed it by interposed buildings, but it is not the less a fault.

Before quitting Luxor, I wish to recall some objects of quite another kind which we met with. I refer to the frescos discovered here some years ago, the date of which it is difficult to determine, although it is certainly posterior to the Christian era. In one of the deserted halls of the Amenopheion, at the present day unroofed, there was an attempt to construct a kind of edifice, half temple half church. The walls had been coated with plaster, which concealed the profane hieroglyphics; and upon this layer of thick stucco had been painted in fresco human figures of the natural size, around the whole of the square hall. In a niche, ornamented with two Greek columns, of very bad taste, and which appears to have been a kind of altar, are clearly visible three personages,—one female and two male figures of great beauty. Outside this niche, on the left, is seen a Roman consul or emperor; and fur-

ther off, on the side wall, a horseman, well seated in his saddle. On the right side the figures are less discernible: one, painted blue, is evidently Egyptian from his dress.

What are these paintings,—what do they represent, and to what period can they be assigned? They are conceived in the grandest style, and have something of Raphael's manner. If they date back, as has been thought, to the solitary anchorites of the Thebais, they show a state of art in those times, which the painting of the sixteenth century can only be said to have revived. It is an enigma, that well deserves to be solved, and I do not think this would be very difficult to the practised eye of a connoisseur.

Such is Luxor: but what shall I say of Karnac? Here all description fails, or falls far short of the subject. I take courage however in thinking that the ablest writers would also fail. Champollion the Younger took the simple course, of not giving any description of the magnificence of these scenes.

After half an hour's ride, we arrived by an avenue, which led from the palace of Luxor to the palaces and temples of Karnac. On either side of this avenue had been a row of sphinxes with rams' heads, of which there are only some mutilated remains. This avenue of statues, some hundreds in number, must have produced a very grand effect. It conducts to a pylon,

of comparatively recent date, by Ptolemy Evergetes, and Queen Berenice, his sister and wife. This pylon is 140 feet high; it has never been finished, and many of the stones still project in their rough state as when first placed.

Beyond this pylon, the far more ancient avenue of sphinxes, which was interrupted by it, recommences, and we arrive at a series of edifices apparently of the time of Rameses IV., B. C. 1200. They are contained in an enclosure nearly square, above 300 feet long and 250 feet wide. The two sides, north and south, are formed by galleries, numerous columns of which still remain in good preservation. One of these columns, which formed part of an avenue in the middle of this large court, is seventy feet high, including the base and capital, and there must be at least twenty-six of this size.

All this, however, is nothing in comparison with the old palace, which we reached at last, after passing under another pylon eighty feet high, at the end of the avenue. This pylon opens into the great hall, 318 feet long and 160 wide. The ceiling, formed of stones, some forty feet long, is sculptured and painted; it is supported by 138 columns; twelve in the centre, similar to the one I have just mentioned, are seventy feet high and thirty-three in circumference. The other 126, which form the two sides of this astonishing

nave, are only forty-five feet high, and twenty-seven or twenty-eight in circumference: they stand, on each side, in seven rows of nine each. Mr. Senior took the trouble to count them.

The singular impression produced on the spectator under this roof is in some degree analogous to that produced by the Pyramids; you are completely overpowered by dimensions which appear superhuman; and might almost ask, as Diodorus did in viewing the monument of Cheops, whether this can be the work of man. I do not believe there is in the world any edifice that can boast a hall of such prodigious magnitude.

The entire structure is of sandstone, similar to that of Denderah, and doubtless brought from the quarries of Selseleh; it is likewise covered with hieroglyphics and paintings. Nearly all these columns are standing, as on the day when they were first erected. Some five or six however, yielding to the action of the water, which during the inundations of the Nile reaches thus far, and in the high floods bathes part of the ruins, have given way. One, amongst others, falling upon another close by, was stopped in its fall by the stone entablature thirty-six feet in length by which it was crowned. This stone has buttressed itself against the column against which it fell without shaking it; and it has propped up at an angle of  $60^{\circ}$

to 65° the column which dragged it down with it. In this violent and sudden fall not one of the stones which form the column, twenty in number, has been disturbed; they are as firmly united at that perilous inclination as if the column had remained standing. If there was iron in Egypt, we might be tempted to imagine that internal iron bars traversed the columns from one end to the other, giving them a solidity and adhesion which they could not otherwise have.

Beyond this hall, which must have been the place of popular assembly on solemn occasions, other pylons lead to new courts, new colonnades, and to obelisks which are among the largest known,—one ninety-four feet high. That of San Giovanni di Laterano at Rome, one of my companions remembered, is a little higher. It has probably been left on its site, because it was thought less beautiful than those which were removed. It is no easy thing to move these immense and delicate monuments without breaking them; and we saw lying on the ground the remains of the largest of all these obelisks, a hundred feet in height, which was broken in the attempt to remove it.

Beyond and around these obelisks is the sanctuary, the ruins of which are scarcely distinguishable, side chambers of granite, and a great number of buildings the character and purposes of which it would require long study to discover. A temple, which appears

small by the side of these gigantic structures, was converted into a church in the early times of Christianity; the ornaments upon the walls, and especially the ceiling, amongst which are heads surrounded by a nimbus, leave no doubt on this point: these accessory works apparently belong to the time when the fervour of the neophytes led them into the deserts of the Thebais, and to these palaces, which they repeopled for some years. One ceiling, painted blue, was bestrewn with golden stars, the colours as bright as if laid on yesterday. Between two walled partitions I remarked a group of pure white marble statues, of exquisite taste, although mixed style. It consists of two women in a sitting posture, holding each other by the hand; the heads are broken. This remarkable work is evidently half Greek and half Egyptian, and in my opinion a rare curiosity. I have never seen it noticed by any traveller, but it well merits description.

Such is Karnac, in all its majesty, in all its ruin. We remained there only a few hours, but the impression produced on us will never be effaced. To complete this imperfect account, I should require to have before me all the drawings that have been made of these marvellous structures; although the most exact representations, and the best-executed photographs, give but a faint idea of them. The reality of dimensions is much in works of this kind, and the propor-

tions, however mathematically preserved, are of secondary importance: columns two or three inches high can never produce such an impression as the real columns five or six hundred times the size.

The temples of Karnac, crowded one beside another, vary much in point of date. Some parts—not the most ancient—belong to the period of Osirtesen I., about B.C. 1750, near the time of Joseph: the polygonal columns are referred to his reign: other parts are attributed to Thothmes I. and Thothmes II., who lived about two centuries later. The principal obelisks were raised by the first of these two princes. The great hall was the work of Osiri I., father of Rameses II., or Sesostris (B.C. 1380), to whom the avenue of sphinxes is attributed. There are some sculptures which belong to the reign of Sheshonk I., the Shishak of the Bible. It is known that this prince took possession of Jerusalem B.C. 971; and among the conquered peoples, whose names are engraved on the stone, Champollion has deciphered that of the king of Judah, Yuda Malek. The columns of the court in which stands this solitary column seventy feet high, bear the cartouche of Tirhaka, the Ethiopian usurper, and that of Psammetichus, 714 and 664 years before the Christian era. I have before briefly noticed the works of the Ptolemies.

Thus Thebes continued to increase, from near the

time when the Great Pyramid was erected, until the invasion of Cambyzes, B.C. 525. That invasion was very fatal to the capital of the Pharaohs; but the first disasters were not irreparable, it appears, for the Greek kings embellished the city which remained. The destruction of Thebes was caused by the siege of three years it sustained (B.C. 110) against Soter II., or Lathyrus, who avenged himself cruelly on the city for its long resistance. The implacable conqueror overthrew the buildings, dispersed the inhabitants, and commenced the final destruction of this venerable city. In the time of Strabo, within a century afterwards, it contained in its vast circuit only poor isolated villages, which in their turn gradually disappeared. At the present day there only remain Luxor, and a few huts at Gournah and Medinet Habou.

On the walls of these ruined temples, on these pylons, are represented, as at Luxor, the conquests and triumphs of two Pharaohs, illustrious in war,—Osiri I., and his son, the great Sesostris. I shall not attempt to describe the immense bas-reliefs representing the principal actions of their lives, and the victories they obtained over a multitude of distant peoples: an account of these is given in Sir Gardner Wilkinson's great and learned work, and they clearly attest that Sesostris, like his warlike father, carried on wars against Asiatic nations.



The day after our visit to Luxor and Karnac, we went along the left bank of the Nile to see the royal tombs of Biban-el-Molouk. After the palaces succeeded the sepulchres, then again other palaces and other tombs. On our way we passed through Gournah, where a superb portico, supported by eight columns, and a multitude of other ruins, excited our admiration, but on these I shall not enlarge at present: we intend to remain here longer on our return, when I may recur to this subject. Gournah is the palace of the great Sesostris, the Ramesseion or palace of Rameses II.

The valley of Biban-el-Molouk, to which we travelled under a burning sun, is the most desolate spot that can be imagined,—it is the valley of the shadow of death. We had begun to form acquaintance with the Desert, but had as yet seen nothing so barren and gloomy. Stones—stones—a little sand—not a blade of grass, not a bird, not a living creature: it is impossible to imagine a spot more fitted to be the abode of death and oblivion.

According to the description given by Strabo and Diodorus, the tombs of the kings could not be sought elsewhere, and Champollion was of opinion that they all belonged to the three Theban dynasties, the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth.

We descended into the tomb of Osiri, father of the

great Sesostris, which is considered the most beautiful, and dates back to the year B.C. 1385. It was first completely discovered by Belzoni in 1816. The entrance is halfway up the hill, and the descent is first by a steep flight of steps, twenty-five feet deep, to a landing-place, beyond which is a second staircase of the same length. Two doors and a long corridor lead to a chamber, nearly square, which Belzoni, finding it closed on all sides, imagined to be the extremity of the sepulchre. This however was not the case, although the arrangement of the stones had been calculated to deceive the most careful examination. He soon discovered that the wall at the bottom was a blind one; and, upon breaking through it, he came to the real tomb, of which these first corridors gave but an imperfect idea. There was first a chamber, twenty-four feet square, supported by four stone pillars covered with emblematic paintings and hieroglyphics; the colours as bright as if laid on the day before. A few steps led to another chamber of equal dimensions, supported by two pillars. Then, passing two corridors, he came to a smaller chamber, fifteen feet square, communicating with one of twenty-five or thirty. On each side were smaller chambers, and lastly a vaulted apartment, twenty feet long and thirty wide.

In the centre of this large chamber was the sarcophagus of Pharaoh, placed in the opening of an inclined

plane ; this descent, down which it doubtless was intended to slide, goes 150 feet deeper into the ground. On either side of it is a flight of steps. This last vault had a similar blind wall of masonry. In one of the corners of this room, and on a level with it, a door led into a large chamber, containing some niches ; and all around, at about four feet from the ground, was a kind of bench, large enough to receive mummies, for which it is supposed to have been intended.

Belzoni first made this discovery, forty years ago ; and we saw it in the same state, excepting the alabaster sarcophagus, which is now, I am informed, in the British Museum.

This tomb, to which we descended slowly, examining the most curious and delicate paintings on the ceiling, is 315 feet long, without reckoning the inclined plane, which is below the sarcophagus. It is in all fully 175 feet in perpendicular depth, not including the last cavity.

Let the reader imagine all these corridors, chambers, apartments, niches, pillars, entirely covered with hieroglyphics, not sculptured but painted, in some parts upon the stone, in others on a coating of stucco. The colours, which have lost nothing of their brilliancy, cover the whole of this vast extent with the brightest and most varied tints. The subjects represented are all semi-mythical and semi-historical : they

are naturally the pictures of individuals, and only depict the life of a single Pharaoh. I will not attempt to explain them; if the reader wishes to learn their signification, he must consult Champollion the Younger, who has copied them all, and Sir Gardner Wilkinson, an equally sure guide. I must limit my remarks to the general impression made upon me: during the whole of our visit, I could but fancy myself the companion of our friend Aladdin of the Arabian Nights. The mountain which we here entered—as curious as those disclosed to him by his marvellous lamp—was of the finest limestone; and these smooth, unbroken walls might have been used by skilful workmen, just as nature presented them to their tools, without fissure or defect. The material was superb, but we may say with the poet, “*materiam superabat opus.*”

From this tomb we proceeded to that of Rameses IV., or Meiamoun, which is smaller, but rendered peculiarly interesting by the details of its paintings. In some small chambers, right and left of the central corridor, are depicted the arts and trades of Egypt. In one place the bakehouse, with all its processes; then the corn grinding, and the bread baking; in another place the equally useful operations of the kitchen; again, everything connected with river and sea navigation; the manufacture of arms of every description; that of musical instruments, with the modes of playing

on them, especially the harp ; and so on. The paintings in these chambers doubtless had reference to the functions of the grand personages whose bodies were deposited here ; but I cannot enter on any description of these, which would lead me too far from my subject.

The tombs at present known are seventeen in number. It appears that they were opened as early as the time of Ptolemy Lathyrus, the cruel destroyer of Thebes. Strabo says there were above forty. Diodorus Siculus, who is more exact, states, from the accounts given him, that there must have been forty-seven : there remain therefore thirty yet to be discovered. The seventeen tombs hitherto found are more or less complete, and vary in depth and execution. We know that every Pharaoh commenced these works on ascending the throne, and continued the excavation, and the execution of the paintings, during the whole of his reign. This accounts for the circumstance, that some tombs are immense, while others are very limited. In some the designs are mere outlines of the hieroglyphics which they were to form. The first tracing in black has in some instances been corrected with red colour by a more skilful hand ; but the work has remained unfinished, death having surprised the monarch and stopped the labours of the artist.

It could not be otherwise ; and a Pharaoh would have acted very unwisely, to leave to his successor the

care of his sepulture. Even in those early times power was too unstable for any reliance to be placed on the piety of successors, and the surest course was for every one to provide for himself whilst he had the power. Some tombs in fact, thus left unfinished, have, from want of loyalty and good-faith, been claimed and appropriated by the successor for his own use, merely changing a few ornaments and inscriptions, covering certain parts with a coating of stucco, and altering the rest. Learned travellers have detected some of these frauds, which are not the less contemptible because perpetrated by royalty.

The tombs of Biban-el-Molouk appeared to me not less astonishing than the Pyramids, or even Karnac; though these works are more delicate, and demand less labour. But what artists must have been required! What innumerable and skilful workmen,—multitudes buried underground for years, and toiling by a light necessarily very bright and steady, to assist them in their difficult and patient labours!

Upon the walls I noticed some Greek and Latin inscriptions, traced by visitors in former ages, whose example we imitated. I shall pass over these, the majority of which are very short, containing little more than names, having presently to speak more particularly of those of Memnon. The inscriptions in the tombs have been collected by the learned,—Hamilton,

Champollion the Younger, and Salt, the English Consul-General, who has bestowed the greatest attention on the subject, and many others. They are 104 in number, and I have little doubt that research would lead to the discovery of others. They range in date from the reign of Trajan to that of Constantine, and are nearly all military: one only is by a Christian hand. They all express the same glowing admiration and amazement, which we ourselves felt.

At Gournah, whither we returned, December 3rd, under a burning sun, new objects of astonishment, no less grand, awaited us. I shall say little of the palace, notwithstanding its splendid remains, which exhibit remarkable evidence of good taste. This is perhaps the most perfect specimen of the best period of Egyptian architecture, although now in decay. It was the Ramesseion, as Champollion reads it in all the inscriptions, or private palace of Sesostris the Great. Here are still seen, with twenty or thirty columns, the traces of three or four spacious halls, the uses of which, satisfactorily attested by the hieroglyphics, are very curious. One hall was used for measuring the corn, as it appears that the tax was paid in kind; further on, was the hall of assembly; then, the most interesting object of all, the hall of books, the hall of the god Thoth, the inventor of letters, and of the goddess Saf, who presided over letters and the hall of books.

The god Thoth is mentioned by Plato in the 'Phædrus,' and quoted by Socrates for his wisdom.

This hall of books, the library of the Ramesseion, led Champollion, the members of the Egyptian Commission, Sir G. Wilkinson, and others, to conjecture that this was the famous tomb of Osymandias, the tradition of whom has been transmitted to us by Diodorus Siculus, following the description given by Hecatæus of Miletus, the contemporary of Herodotus. The particulars which may still be collected upon the spot confirm this supposition exactly ; and when such men as those I have mentioned pronounce an opinion, we can hardly refuse to accept it upon their simple statement. The name of Osymandias is not well ascertained, and it seems that we should rather seek the tomb at Biban-el-Molouk, instead of Gournah. But, notwithstanding these difficulties, which the learned have failed to remove, we cannot but believe that the Ramesseion contained (B.C. 1350) that famous Library, that *remedium animæ*, which reflects greater honour upon Sesostris than his most sanguinary conquests. The mere mention of books, of a library, at so early a period, is startling. It was not until a thousand years later that Greece made such an attempt ; and the Ptolemies of Alexandria must only have been the imitators of the Pharaohs. What problems still remain to be solved in this ancient land of Egypt !



The severe beauty of these remains of the Ramesseion well deserve a closer examination. I cannot leave them without noticing briefly the prodigious colossus, the fragments of which lie scattered upon the ground. We mounted upon the head, where, with our slippery shoes, we could scarcely keep from falling. Including a part of the chest and shoulders it is twelve to thirteen feet high. This monolith statue, of red granite from Syene or Assouan, represented Rameses II. in a sitting posture, with the hands upon his knees, in repose. It was thirty-five feet high, and, with the throne, in the form of a pedestal, the entire monument was nearly seventy feet in height. Egyptian art has executed nothing evincing greater power; and the statue alone, according to the calculation of Sir G. Wilkinson, must have weighed nearly nine hundred tons.

This monument, it appears, was overthrown by the Persians under Cambyzes; but how could they have broken it? What force could they have employed for the destruction, equally great as that required for the erection, of such a mass? Can we imagine that there was at that time any power that could have produced still greater effects than gunpowder? The subject baffles our comprehension.

It was within a few paces of this colossus, which has lain there overthrown 2400 years, that I met those

little Christian children whom I mentioned in a former letter, and the sight of whom affected us even more than these wonderful and gigantic monuments.

On leaving Gournah, our route lay across a plain, which, although then dry, is frequently inundated by the Nile. The celebrated vocal Statue is the first object met with in coming from the north, as we did. I climbed upon the pedestal, and read upon the left big toe some of the Greek inscriptions which Letronne has so well explained, although he never visited Egypt; his knowledge of them being derived from the accurate copy made by Mr. Salt.

These inscriptions on the pedestal and legs are seventy-two in number, Greek and Latin, dated and undated. The first date is A.D. 64, the tenth year of the reign of Nero; the last is 130 years later, of the reign of Septimius Severus, who restored the Statue.

Few of these inscriptions are really curious, either from the persons whose names they bear, or from their style and expression. Whole families went in parties to hear the speaking Statue; rising very early in the morning, in order to arrive in time, and not to lose the favourable moment: it was always at sunrise that the voice sounded. At one time the mother and daughter make the trial, at another the husband and wife, with or without their children. The majority of the visitors are soldiers, on their way to or from their

station in Upper Egypt: such or such an officer, for instance, boasts of having heard the Statue ten or twelve times. Almost all the Prefects of the province of Egypt have here inscribed their names, and among others are those of some professors of the Museum of Alexandria, who have assumed this distinction, associated with an obscure name, graven upon the stone.

The latest of all these inscriptions is that of Ulpianus Premianus, Prefect of Egypt in the third year of the reign of Septimius Severus, in the month of February, A.D. 194. The most illustrious is that of the Emperor Adrian, who at the close of the year 130 passed nearly a month in Upper Egypt, with his wife the Empress Sabina. The names of Adrian, in letters half Greek and half Latin, and that of Sabina in Greek characters, are still distinctly legible. It appears that among the courtiers was a poetess named Balbilla, who accompanied those august personages to hear the Statue, and was ordered to commemorate the important event in verse. She returned several times, with the Emperor or Empress. I subjoin a translation of two of her inscriptions; the third is too mutilated to be deciphered entire.

DE JULIA BALBILLA,

QUAND L'AUGUSTE ADRIEN ENTENDIT MEMNON.

C'est bien vrai qu'on entend l'Egyptien Memnon  
Parler quand le soleil l'échauffe d'un rayon.

Dès qu'il vit Adrien, qui devançait l'aurore,  
 En lui disant: Bonjour, il montra qu'il l'honore.  
 Puis, quand Phœbus, guidant ses coursiers lumineux,  
 Partageait par moitié l'ombre tombant des cieux,  
 Memnon, aussi bruyant que l'airain que l'on touche,  
 Répéta le bonjour par trois fois, de sa bouche.  
 Adrien, à son tour, le salua trois fois.  
 Balbilla fit ces vers pour célébrer la voix,  
 Et prouver, en disant ce qu'elle vient d'entendre,  
 Combien l'amour des dieux pour Adrien est tendre.

This translation can claim no merit beyond being strictly literal, verse for verse: I neither add nor curtail a single one.

The following is the second inscription. On this occasion Balbilla was alone with Sabina. It seems that the Statue had not been very respectful to the Empress: the first time she went away without hearing anything; on returning, she was more fortunate, and Balbilla celebrates her success.

Ici moi, Balbilla, j'entendis le doux son  
 Que rend, sous ce rocher, Phaménoth ou Memnon.  
 J'étais avec Sabine, à tous les cœurs si chère;  
 Et le soleil levant commençait sa carrière.  
 L'an quinze d'Adrien, dont je suivais la cour;  
 Le mois d'Athyr comptait son vingt-cinquième jour.

I must again beg your indulgence; though indeed Balbilla's verses are not much better than my own.

The best-turned lines perhaps are those of a certain Asclepiodotus, a *soi-disant* poet, perhaps one of the

poets of the Museum, and at the same time imperial intendant, *Epitropos*.

D'ASCLÉPIODOTE.

Thétis, tu vois Memnon qui vit et parle encore,  
Réchauffé par les feux de sa mère l'Aurore,  
Sur la rive où le Nil près des monts Libyens  
Coupe les murs de Thèbe aux portiques anciens.  
Tandis que ton Achille, aux bords de Thessalie,  
Ou dans les champs Troyens, est muet et sans vie.

The style of these verses is certainly not very rich, but in general the Latin inscriptions are still poorer than the Greek.

Balbilla is not the only woman who addressed verses to Memnon ; many others have done the same, and one in particular named Trebulla. These Roman dames wrote in the Greek language as easily as their own, perhaps even better. This is a remarkable fact ; and, in our days, if a Frenchwoman were to make English, or an Englishwoman French verses, she would be called a blue-stockings. The ancients thought otherwise ; and the glory of Sappho encouraged all women in writing verses, without fear of incurring ridicule. There were also Romans who composed Greek verses ; indeed, for a long time, Greek had been the language used in all the best society ; and, had I not quoted so much already, I might cite a Greek inscription—one of the least bad—by a certain Gemellus, who came to see the Statue in company with his wife and children.

I return from this digression, to speak of the Statue.

Among the writers of antiquity, Strabo is the first who mentions this marvellous sound emitted by the Statue, which he heard in company with Ælius Gallus, the Governor of Egypt. He had too much good sense, however, to be the dupe of a fraud; he says that he could not distinguish whether the sound came from the pedestal, from the Statue, or from the persons near its base, who were escorting the visitors. Strabo does not mention the name of Memnon, the pure Greek origin of which it is difficult to explain; but, less than a century after Strabo, Juvenal, who is said to have died in exile at Syene in Upper Egypt, speaks of it, as does also Pliny.

Pausanias, at the end of the second century, knew only of Amenophis, not of Memnon. It seems therefore that the Greeks had the true tradition; and, according to the hieroglyphics upon the back of the Statue, which is one half of granite and the other of sandstone, Champollion affirms that it is a figure of Amenophis, or Amunothph, of the eighteenth dynasty, who reigned about the year 1680 B.C. This nearly agrees with what the Thebans related from tradition, when interrogated by Pausanias.

In Strabo's time the Statue had already been injured and restored; and it seems very probable that

its emission of sounds may only date from that period. Since that time, either by violence or accident, a fissure has been made, extending along the whole back of the Statue, large enough for a person to get in at the upper part, opposite to the chest, and a sound like that of a bell may be produced by striking with a stone upon a certain point. M. de Lesseps afforded us an opportunity of hearing this, by ordering an Arab to climb into this fissure: the man brought us a fragment of the stone upon which he struck. It was not, however, from this part that the sound proceeded in ancient times, since the Statue was broken there; nor can we imagine, as Strabo seems to have done, that a trick was practised. The phenomenon is capable of a far more simple explanation: the memoir of Letronne has given the complete and unquestionable solution.

This colossal statue was of granite, like the neighbouring one. In the year 27 B.C. it was broken nearly at the height of the belly by an earthquake: the emission of the sound dates from that period. The stone, a breccia composed of heterogeneous materials cemented together by a hard siliceous paste, was of such a nature that, on sudden changes of temperature, an internal cracking noise was heard, like that produced by sulphur heated in the hand. These sudden changes took place when the sun ap-

peared, and restored warmth to the air after the cold nights of this climate. A phenomenon identically similar has been witnessed a hundred times, both with the stone of Egypt and that of other countries; but this ordinary natural occurrence was here met with in a statue; and, aided by the imagination, the legend of Memnon was soon invented, from the name of the place where it stood, Memnonia,—the corruption of an Egyptian word, *Mannoun*, a tomb.

For a long time this strange sound remained unnoticed, and fifty years at least passed before it was observed. When, at a later period, Septimius Severus, from superstition perhaps, and to do honour to Memnon, repaired the Statue with five enormous blocks of freestone, which are still there, the voice suddenly ceased; the vibration was stopped, and the Statue became mute. The piety of Septimius Severus missed its object; in aiming to restore the monument, he robbed it of its peculiar character.

However credulous, the ancients were veracious; it is a well-ascertained fact, that the voice, or rather sound, was heard during nearly two centuries; only the voice was not that of Memnon the son of Aurora. The fact was perfectly true, but the explanation was absurd; nor is this the first time such things have occurred: what examples might be cited, far more mischievous than this!



These two Statues, which tower above the plain now as they did four thousand years ago, and which the fury of Cambyses respected, were not, it appears, the only ones. Sir Gardner Wilkinson entertains no doubt they were the commencement of that royal street which some papyri mention, and which extended from the Amenopheion to the Nile, facing Luxor. The river was crossed in a ferry-boat. Remains of other colossi, to the number of eighteen or twenty, still lie scattered on the plain, and the conjecture of Sir G. Wilkinson has a strong ground of probability. The city of Thebes extended along the two banks of the river; and in fact, all these structures must, as he supposes, have been connected and formed one whole. Champollion thinks that the palace of Amenophis, from the fragments of it which remain, could not have been inferior in grandeur to Karnac; and, in traversing these ruins, the traveller forms the same opinion. It appears that Amenophis, long before Osiri I. and Sesostris, made war on some peoples of Asia; and the hieroglyphics deciphered on these scattered remains of broken monuments attest that they represented the kings vanquished by this Pharaoh. These secondary colossi were only twenty feet high, whilst the statue of the conqueror was three times that height.

In concluding this Letter, which has extended to

a great length, I must not omit to speak of Medinet Habou, that pile of temples and palaces, of all periods and styles, from the time of Moses to that of the Roman emperors, the Christians, and the Arabs : it is, as Champollion observes, an epitome of monumental Egypt : we find here, in juxtaposition, a temple of the most brilliant period of the Pharaohs under the eighteenth dynasty, an immense palace of the period of the conquests, an edifice of the first period of decline under the Ethiopian invasion, a small temple built under one of the princes who had thrown off the Persian yoke, a propylæum of the Greek dynasty, other propylæa of the Roman period, and lastly the ruins of a Christian church ; not to mention the Arab hovels, the ruins of which cover and deface the rest. Champollion has devoted a letter of forty pages to these ruins, and was even then obliged to abridge his account, in order to say something of them all. I can hardly bestow forty lines upon them ; but I may observe that, even after Luxor and Karnac, after having seen Biban-el-Molouk, Gournah, and the Memnonium, we have been astonished and delighted with Medinet Habou. This is no small praise, but it is in no degree exaggerated.

The first court or enclosure, surrounded with columns, is not less than 120 feet by 80 : it belongs to the time of the Emperor Antoninus, and appears to

have been constructed of stones taken from the palace of the great Rameses at Gournah. A second and rather smaller court is attributed to Nectanebo, of the thirtieth dynasty, and to Taharaka, the Ethiopian usurper, the legends relating to whom are everywhere defaced with the hammer. These two courts, with the pylons, the propylæa, and the chapels attached to them, lead to a considerable edifice, a sanctuary surrounded with galleries, pillars, columns, and eight halls of different sizes. It dates back to Thothmosis I., Thothmosis II., and Thothmosis III., the Mæris of the Greeks. It is covered with sculptures and hieroglyphics of the most beautiful style. According to Sir Gardner Wilkinson it belongs to the sixteenth century before Christ, but Champollion even assigns it to the eighteenth. The sculptures represent the exploits of a Pharaoh who is little known, as those of Luxor, Karnac, and the Ramesseion represented the exploits of Osiri I. and the great Sesostris.

We passed a *dromos*, a kind of avenue, 260 feet long, leading between pyramidal towers and pylons, to a vast court, 105 feet by 130. The colonnades, right and left, are of the purest and most elegant Egyptian style. Beyond this court is another still larger, 120 feet by 130. The columns of the interior peristyle are twenty-five feet high, with capitals in the best taste, and their circumference is nearly a third.

The centre of this magnificent court is obstructed by a colonnade of the Christian times, the mean and ill-proportioned forms of which contrast miserably with the grand objects which surround and overpower it. Both the inside and outside of the Pharaoh court are covered with hieroglyphics and bas-reliefs, commemorating the most interesting events of the reign of Rameses Meiamoun, his victories over the peoples of Africa and Asia; they are also gorgeous proofs of his piety to Ammon, to whom he dedicated this temple. But I refrain from entering further into these details, and refer the reader for them to the works of Champollion and Sir Gardner Wilkinson.

All around this wonderful Medinet Habou are ruins of the highest interest, which we had not time to visit, including two or three small temples, consecrated to Thoth and Isis, of the time of the Ptolemies and the Roman Emperors: here are the tombs of the queens and pallacides, a Greek word which I borrow, without venturing to translate it, from Strabo and Diodorus: here are the temples of Dayr-el-Medineh and Dayr-el-Bahri, which exhibit regular vaulted roofs, of brickwork, more than three thousand years old; here also is a fortified camp, where doubtless was stationed the garrison of Thebes under the Pharaohs; likewise innumerable tombs in the plain and surrounding mountains, especially at Assassif, where the sepul-

chre of a grand personage described by Sir G. Wilkinson, is not less than twenty-two thousand feet square, and contains buildings of every style; here are likewise the tombs of Kournet-Murrai, of the hill of the Sheik Abd-el-Kourneh, to the number of thirty-five or forty, some of which, according to Sir Gardner Wilkinson, nearly equal those of Biban-el-Molouk.

Here I stop, wishing that these details, incomplete as they are, may give the reader some idea of the wonders and remains of Thebes. I do not hesitate to affirm, that man has never achieved anything more grand, and rarely created anything more beautiful.

After Thebes, I have scarcely courage to speak of the Temple of Esneh, the Latopolis of the Greeks, which we reached December 4th. It is at the present day twenty feet under the ground; Mehemet Ali, during a visit in 1842, ordered it to be cleared of the earth in which it was buried. Still less inclined am I to enlarge on the grand temple of Edfou, which is wholly Ptolemaic, and would be beautiful even if it stood alone. One object I should have wished to describe are the quarries of Selseleh, which furnished Thebes with the magnificent stone, of which all her palaces and temples are built. To judge of them from the descriptions of Champollion and Wilkinson, the working of these immense quarries is scarcely a less curious study than the structures which have arisen out of them.

On the 6th of December we were at Assouan, the Syene of the ancients, whence were procured the admirable granites of the obelisks. We saw here in the mountain one of these monoliths, which was never completely extracted: it remains lying in the quarry, detached only on three sides; nor is it probable this work will ever be finished,—it does not belong to our age.

At four o'clock the next morning we started on horseback, to go and visit the Island of Philæ, above the first Cataract. After a brisk ride, on an excellent road, bordered on one side by walls of sun-dried bricks, which belong to the times of the Pharaohs, we arrived opposite to Philæ, whose verdure and temples we had discerned the evening before above the Falls of the Nile.

Philæ is a charming oasis in the river: it is impossible to imagine all its freshness and charm, succeeding the frightful desert which has to be crossed to reach it. The whole island, which is not large, is covered with remains, not very ancient, the oldest being that of Nectanebo, of the thirtieth dynasty, B.C. 390. The rest belong to the Ptolemies and the Roman Emperors. On a wall in one of the temples are two long and curious Greek inscriptions: one is the petition of the priests of Philæ to Ptolemy Physcon, to be relieved from the enormous cost imposed

on them by the continual visits made to this beautiful spot; the other is the answer of the king, who graciously grants the petition. The two inscriptions have been restored and deciphered by M. Letronne.

An inscription of another kind is that which our army left, in 1799, when it arrived and stopped here, not thinking it necessary to cross the frontier of Upper Egypt: it is as follows:—

“ L’an VI de la République, le 13 messidor, une armée française, commandée par Bonaparte, est descendue à Alexandrie. L’armée ayant mis, vingt jours après, les Mamelouks en fuite aux Pyramides, Desaix, commandant la première division, les a poursuivis au delà des cataractes, où il est arrivé le 13 ventôse de l’an VII: les généraux de brigade, Davoust, Friant et Belliard; Donzelot, chef de l’état-major; Latournerie, commandant l’artillerie; Eppler, chef de la 21<sup>e</sup> légère; le 13 ventôse, an VII de la République, 3 mars, an de J. C. 1799.”

In another part of the temple, high up on a wall, is this inscription:—“ R. F. An VII. Balzac, Coquebert, Corabœuf, Costaz, Coutelle, Lacipilère, Ripeault, Lepère, Méchain, Nouet, Lenoir, Nectoux, Saint-Génis, Vincent, Dutertre, Savigny.—Long. depuis Paris, 30, 34, 16. Lat. boréale, 24, 1, 34.”

I have said nearly all I most wanted to say of the monuments we have visited; but how many others

are there, less grand indeed, which we have not seen ! It seems that at Ipsamboul, in Nubia, the temples excavated in the rock, the façades of which are ornamented with four and six colossi thirty-five feet in height, beside those in the interior, are very beautiful of their kind ; and Champollion even says, that the largest of these temples would be a marvel at Thebes. They are attributed to Rameses the Great ; as those of Wady Halfa, close to the second Cataract, are ascribed to Amenophis II., son and successor of Mœris, about 1450 B.C. To my great regret, we were unable to reach these, as Philæ was necessarily the furthest point of our expedition.



## LETTER X.

## EGYPTIAN ARCHITECTURE.

Ruins of Rameses, in the Wady Toumilat,  
Dec. 25th, 1855.

CHRISTMAS-DAY! To celebrate this day, at least by rest, our caravan has halted at 3 o'clock, and we shall not proceed further. This evening, at nightfall, we shall make a splendid bonfire with the bushes of the desert; and our Arabs are already forming the pile, which will be at least fifteen feet high. Encamped on a perfectly firm soil, in which the stakes of our tents have a safe hold, we are within half a league of the ruins of Rameses, which we intend to visit; I shall give you some account of them in another Letter.

Whilst awaiting the departure of my friends, whom I shall accompany to the ruins, I wish to collect, as well as I can, my general impressions on Egyptian architecture. Whatever opinion may be entertained of the merits of this style, it is assuredly very striking,

and merits an important place in the history of art. This fact was felt and acknowledged even in Winckelmann's time, a century ago. At the present day its omission would be inexcusable, and I observe with pleasure that all works pretending to give a complete history of architecture, like that of the Chevalier Luigi Canina, invariably begin with that of Egypt. This is its place, in point of date, if not of beauty, for we must now regard its priority as an undoubted fact.

Egyptian architecture presents problems of two kinds,—first, regarding its own intrinsic character and merit; and secondly, its relations to the other styles of architecture worthy of the name, especially that of Greece. What are its peculiar and comparative merits? Was Egypt the instructress of Greece? and did the latter borrow from Egypt the rules of that admirable art, which she carried, together with others, to such perfection?

It is a singular fact, that Winckelmann, who has devoted the second book of his *History of Art* to this particular subject,—Art among the Egyptians,—has scarcely treated at all of their architecture. I am aware that this great antiquary died prematurely, in 1768, murdered by his servant at Trieste; but, although he was hardly fifty years of age, his immortal work had already appeared four years, and it is not

probable that he intended ever to fill the chasm, which was so much to be regretted. The little that he has said is replete with sagacity and justness. Winckelmann saw clearly that Egyptian art was long anterior to Grecian art, which however was not an imitation of it; and, using a metaphor which may be thought fanciful, but which is profoundly exact and true, he compares Egyptian art to a tree of a good sort, which, punctured by an insect, has been stopped in its growth and perished without attaining its perfect development.

The silence of Winckelmann was not however generally satisfactory; it was felt that science might go much further. In 1785, our Academy of Inscriptions and Belles Lettres, with a view to supply the omission, proposed as a prize subject a question which included most of the problems I have just indicated: the few competitors capable of entering upon these curious researches, were required to study Egyptian architecture, in its origin, principles, and taste, and to institute a comparison of it with the Grecian architecture. The prize was adjudged to M. Quatremère de Quincy, and his Memoir, which he did not publish until eighteen years afterwards, in 1803, laid the basis of a reputation which his numerous admirable works have since extended and confirmed.

In 1785 nothing was yet known of hieroglyphics;

our expedition of 1798, the Rosetta Stone, and Champollion the Younger, at length combined to decipher the enigma which ages had vainly attempted to solve. From that time some fragments were collected in the museums of Europe, and were illustrated by numerous drawings and descriptions. This was all that the mind of such a man as M. Quatremère de Quincy required. His Memoir, which has now been published seventy-one years, has not been surpassed, and I doubt whether it ever will be. The hieroglyphics, when more studied and better understood, will teach us many of the details essential to the history of the potentates who erected these gigantic edifices: they will teach us nothing of the value of Egyptian art. This is simply an æsthetical question, with which archæology has nothing to do. What are the limits of beauty in Egyptian architecture, its merits and defects? I do not think the students of Egyptian history are called upon to answer these questions, and I commend them for not attempting it; because in so doing they would quit their proper sphere, in which so many discoveries yet await them of great interest and importance.

As we traversed these colossal ruins, admiring the porticoes, colonnades, obelisks, palaces, and temples, a painful reflection continually forced itself upon our minds;—these were indeed the abodes of the priests and kings; but the people, where did *they* dwell?

Here are the splendid homes of opulence and power, —but the mass of the people, where are the roofs that sheltered *them*? This reflection may have suggested itself also to the reader, and I shall state a simple explanation, at which we arrived long afterwards. The houses of private persons perished, without leaving any trace but confused heaps of ruins, because these buildings were not strong enough to resist the effects of time. Nor is this phenomenon peculiar to Egypt; it is the same with all the great ruins of cities once populous and well built, Baalbec, Palmyra, and a hundred others far less ancient than Thebes, which have only palaces and temples remaining like the latter city; and, as only a part of the population of a large city lives in palaces, where we no longer find private houses, the simple reason is that they have been swept away by the continual action of natural destructive causes, which undermine the works of man as soon as his hand ceases to labour at their preservation.

The former existence of private houses in Thebes is an unquestionable fact, and Diodorus Siculus tells us that many of them had five stories. They could only be built of brick, partly burnt and partly sun-dried, and this proves that the population under the Pharaohs crowded together in the large cities, as ours now do, at the expense of public and private health. These immense human cages may be convenient in certain

respects, but Art has no reason to lament their loss ; their preservation would have had little worth except as objects of curiosity.

I now return to the palaces and temples, the only true representatives of nations and ages.

The most striking feature in Egyptian architecture is its prodigious solidity and massiveness, which however does not wholly exclude elegance. The proof of this solidity is, that most of these structures, where they have not suffered from profane violence, remain to the present day as perfect as if just finished. There are no ruins, except those caused by destructive barbarism and vengeance. Had it not been for the violence of the Shepherds, of CambySES, of the Greeks and Arabs, together with the extensive spoiliations made by cupidity or science, Thebes would still remain entire, and we might behold almost the same city as was seen by Rameses, or by Joseph while minister to Pharaoh.

M. Quatremère de Quincy assigns several reasons for this astonishing duration,—the climate, the institutions, and the scientific skill of the builders. These reasons are doubtless excellent ; but a stronger one is, that Thebes was fortunate in having no neighbours ready to despoil her. For more than thirty leagues around, or rather along the valley of the Nile, there was not, nor is there still, a single town of importance.

No enemy came from such a distance to plunder Thebes; indeed the difficulty of carrying away the spoil would have been too great. The reason that the Pyramids, especially the Great Pyramid, were stript of the casing of marble which covered them, was, that Cairo arose in the vicinity. Cairo was built of portions which were unscrupulously pulled down, as they could be transported without trouble. The innumerable palaces which surrounded the Pyramids were successively rased, and their fragments were used to adorn the houses of the capital. Thebes was respected, simply because it would have been too difficult to pillage it.

What, we may ask, gave to Egyptian art, with this character of massive solidity, these colossal architectural proportions? What can have given origin to them? Why is Egyptian art so heavy, whilst Grecian and even Arabian art is so light, slender, and elegant? M. Quatremère de Quincy says, that this fundamental difference is attributable to the primitive mode of life of the several races. In Egypt, where there is neither wood nor metals, the people were unable to construct houses, and their first habitations were caves; and as the nature of the mountains admirably facilitated works of excavation,—as for instance the quarries of Mokattan, Biban-el-Molouk, Selseleh, etc.,—these works multiplied in Egypt more than elsewhere.

There is no country where man has made so many subterranean retreats ; and in all parts of the land, on the banks of the Nile and in the rocks which embank or adjoin it, the number of excavations of all sorts, for private or sacred purposes, constantly discovered is prodigious.

In their architecture the Egyptians naturally studied to reproduce the chief features of their primitive habitations ; and their edifices, with the invariably flat ceilings, massive colonnades, enormous stones, straight lines and square doorways, are merely the reproduction of the caverns in which they originally lived, where art was prosecuted underground before it reached the light of day.

In Greece, on the contrary, architecture imitated, not the cavern, which had never been needed, but the house, the skilfully constructed wooden framework of which, hewn from huge forests, exhibited from the first the rudiments of art.

I do not deny the weight of this theory, and it must be admitted that the great hypogean temples of Ipsamboul in Nubia give it a certain authority : but the origin of things is always so obscure, that in my opinion it is unwise to attempt to fathom it ; and, ingenious as this explanation undoubtedly is, I simply take it for what it is, without attaching to it much importance. Egyptian architecture is before us, and



I think it wiser to study what we see than to attempt to ascertain, in the obscurity of remote ages, the conceptions out of which it first arose.

One great merit which must be assigned to this school of architecture is its perfect originality. In Egypt it arose and in Egypt it was developed, or rather it reigned, underived from any other people, and without transmission to any. At the same time it is equally monotonous as original. To see one temple is to see all; and, excepting the dimensions and number of the parts (invariably alike) of which they are composed, there is no difference in the thought which conceived and executed them.

The causes of this uniformity are evident, and are written in unquestionable characters on the very stones of which the edifices are formed. As these edifices are all of a religious character, the monarchical or sacerdotal power interfered at an early period to determine irrevocably all the details, and the use of each part, from the sanctuary placed in the most secluded end of the temple, to the external wall reserved for inscriptions and historical bas-reliefs. These hieroglyphics of every dimension, these figures of every kind, sometimes majestic but more often grotesque, human bodies surmounted with heads of animals, or the bodies of animals surmounted with human heads, these formed the annals of the people, their archives, their

libraries. The artist (if the word may be used here), in building the temple on a certain plan, executed an order the merits of which he was never permitted to discuss; in carving on the stone certain lineaments, which he doubtless did not understand, and the secrets of which were known only to his masters, he executed another order, if possible still less open to question. To alter a feature, to misplace the apparently most insignificant figure, was to commit a sacrilege; it was a crime not only against the majesty of the kings, but also against the sanctity of the gods.

Art, trammelled in these leading-strings, could not attain any free growth; it could at most only continue to exist; and it was undoubted evidence of a powerful vitality, that it was not utterly stifled, and retained such vigorous life.

A slight glance at Egyptian art shows that this immutability is a fact, and not a mere theory, like that which I just mentioned. But this fact is also attested in the most formal manner by testimony which cannot be gainsaid, and which is now twenty-two centuries old—that of Plato. In the second book of his admirable treatise on Laws,\* he states positively, that “the models were deposited in the temples, and the artists were prohibited from introducing any innovation, or departing in any respect from what had been

\* Page 82 of M. Cousin's translation.

established by the laws." Plato adds, "This prohibition exists still [towards the year 400 B.C.], and applies to the figures and the works of sculpture and painting, and to pieces of music of every kind: more than ten thousand years, literally, have passed since these regulations were laid down, and the works of those remote times were neither more nor less beautiful than those of our days. They are all, without exception, executed after the same patterns, and the taste for pleasure has not prevailed over antiquity." Plato, it is said, travelled in Egypt, and doubtless he merely repeated the testimony of the priests. The priests of Sais, in the Delta, said the same to Solon: their annals, preserved in the temples, dated back, if we may believe them, above eight thousand years; and Critias, who figures in the *Timæus*,\* received these traditions from his grandfather, to whom they had been imparted from the lips of Solon on his return from Egypt.

No doubt therefore can exist on this subject; the sight of the monuments themselves and the assertions of history agree; all is conventional in Egyptian art, which had never the slightest degree of freedom.

Wherever liberty is destroyed, the best and most genial elements in man's nature are extinguished: it is more than depriving him of half his soul, as the

\* Page 110 of M. Cousin's translation.

poet says. With regard to Egyptian art, the consequences were disastrous ; it never made the slightest progress. The metaphor of Winckelmann is strikingly just : the insect which punctured the tree, and deprived it of its sap, is the power, whatever it was, which seized it at a certain moment of its existence, and insuperably barred its growth with obstacles of a religious nature. This is the reason that sculpture never attained to statuary, that painting never had colours, that even the historical bas-reliefs never represented portraits ; and lastly that art never attempted to imitate and to rival nature. Winckelmann has correctly remarked, that the Egyptian artists do not appear to have dreamed of the science of anatomy. This is true, and the general restraint under which they worked, evidently forbade them to study any other models than those which were given them to reproduce servilely.

This was a reproach, moreover, which even the ancients brought against Egyptian art. Strabo remarks, that “the artists of this country do not study corporeal imitation ; they never give to their figures a picturesque attitude ; in a word, they have never consulted the Graces.” Strabo therefore blames them ; and, as in art authority is nothing, and the beautiful is everything, he does not hesitate to condemn a system which destroyed genius whilst pretending to direct it. Plato appears, on the contrary, to approve these rigid laws ;

and he so much distrusts deviations from the laws of art, that he would bend it to the yoke, without fear, and even without much regret. Although reluctantly, I must take part with Strabo, against the disciple of Socrates. Unquestionably art must be amenable to rules, nor should it be abandoned, without direction, to arbitrary caprice ; but it is for public opinion, and not for law, to control it.

Egyptian art, under the law which minutely prescribed its every movement, maintained a bare existence. There is indeed one grand exception, of which I shall presently speak.

Another, equally certain, consequence of this oppressive restraint upon art, is that it extinguishes taste. To deny all kind of taste to Egyptian art, is perhaps to say much, in the presence of so many figures possessing their own peculiar grace and beauty. But if we turn to Greck art, and contemplate for an instant those marvels which unite elegance and strength, simplicity and science, delicacy and power, harmony and diversity, we cannot turn without a painful impression to these Egyptian figures, the stiffness of which attests but too strongly that life has never been in these conventional images. How can a shadow of taste be attributed to an art, which has committed such egregious mistakes, as to imagine that the material size of the object constituted the grandeur

of the representation? A great monarch, illustrious in peace and war, is represented by a colossus sixty feet high, whilst figures of the kings whom he has conquered do not exceed twenty feet! Such misconceptions are inconsistent with taste; and, notwithstanding all my admiration for Egyptian art, I am of opinion that in that most delicate and refined sense of art, called taste, it was almost wholly deficient. At the same time I may add, that, even with this defect, which is very great, it merits the admiration of posterity.

Solidity, which M. Quatremère de Quincy justly terms the soundness of architecture, being the peculiar characteristic of Egyptian art, it remains to be seen in what this wonderful quality originated. In my opinion it had three principal causes,—the nature of the materials, the skill with which they were put together, and the immense size of the superimposed masses. The nature of the materials does not depend upon the artist, who has only the task of choosing them: but the two other causes depend upon him alone, and reflect the greatest honour upon him.

It is well known that Egypt is perhaps the country on the globe most gifted by nature with materials proper for architecture,—I do not say for statuary. It seems as if the abundance and variety of stone were a compensation for the want of wood and metals. Instead of these, we find compact, fine-grained limestone,

hard sandstone, granites still more durable, materials for cements which nothing injures, but which art has rarely employed elsewhere, and an earth which is easily made into extremely solid bricks, and which the sun's heat is generally sufficient to bake. Marble, porphyry, and basalt, Egypt does not naturally possess, but she early obtained them from neighbouring countries. Sinai furnished very beautiful marbles, Arabia porphyries, and Ethiopia basalts, on which our best-tempered chisels scarcely make any impression.

Such are the natural advantages possessed by Egypt; those derived from art are far more considerable. Charles Perrault, among the paradoxes he has maintained in order to flatter the vanity of the moderns and depreciate the ancients, has pretended that the latter knew nothing of the art of cutting stone. This was perhaps to please his brother Claude, the architect of the Louvre: but his criticism, however unjust to the Greeks and Romans, was, if possible, more so to the Egyptians. There is no people who practised with greater success the working of stone, properly so called, not in all its details, but in its essential and truly architectonic parts. We must admit, with M. Quatremère de Quincy, that the Egyptian architects were totally ignorant of the artificial processes by which solidity is given to modern buildings. Art was then too simple, and at the same time too robust, to get

beyond the sawing of stones, the accurate squaring of them, and giving them their marvellous polish with the sand of Ethiopia, which is as hard as diamond dust, or the sand of Pelusium, so extolled by Pliny.

At the same time, in connection with these forms, which exhibit the infancy and rudiments of the art, what exactness and precision, what firm and imperceptible joints ! The moderns vainly attempt to rival them ; and, whatever Perrault may say, they do not surpass the Egyptians in this kind of work. It must be admitted that the Greeks and Romans shared in this respect the inferiority of the moderns. There is perhaps only the Temple of Jupiter at Agrigentum, among the works of the Greeks and Romans, that, according to Winckelmann, can rival the temples of Egypt, in the dimensions of the stones, the perfection of the joints, the accuracy of squaring, and the bold relief of the mouldings. Charles Perrault was therefore mistaken on this point, as he was in his criticism upon Homer, and many other subjects ; his assertions respecting the unskilfulness and ignorance of the ancients in stone-cutting, are mere fictions, which are very far from having the merit of those delicious fairy tales in which Perrault excelled all his predecessors, and struck out a path unknown to Greece or Rome.

There is one thing still more astonishing than the perfection of cutting and squaring,—the use of the



chisel, which was more employed in Egyptian architecture than in that of any other country. Most of the hieroglyphics are cut in, to a greater or less depth; and the incisions are so accurate, that they appear as if made by a punch. Yet they are cut in the hard and solid granite, and sometimes even in basalt, as for instance in the sarcophagi deposited in the Louvre. The basalt turns the edge of our best tools, and soon renders our steel instruments of the finest temper unserviceable. The Egyptians seem to have played with these difficulties, which are to us insurmountable; and another fact, almost incredible, is that they had only instruments of bronze. By what means did they temper them? What skilfulness and power of hand must they have possessed, to engrave so accurately and truly such an intractable material! This is indeed an enigma as difficult as that of the hieroglyphics, and one which our architects will not discover so easily as the Egyptologists have solved the former.

Cosmo de' Medici, the first Grand Duke of Tuscany, discovered, as his architect Vasari tells us, the secret of cutting granite with the chisel in the Egyptian style. But the secret, found for an instant, and doubtless by accident, was soon lost, and remains so to this day. The Egyptians, with greater skill and attention, acquired and preserved the art for centuries.

This circumstance has appeared so astonishing to some historians, that, to explain it, they have imagined the Egyptians must have had a means of softening the stone before working it ; but this paradoxical solution of the problem does not much advance the question, which is simply transferred from architecture to chemistry ; we must then ask chemists, whether they possess any agents capable of rendering granite, porphyry, and basalt soft as wax for a moment, and at a given place, and then restoring them to their natural hardness. Chemists would be no less embarrassed, I imagine, than their scientific brethren of the square and compass. Of the two puzzles I prefer adhering to the former ; I am not for multiplying causes needlessly.

After the consideration of architecture, properly so called, comes that of the means of execution it employed. Winckelmann and Quatremère de Quincy quite agree as to the incontestable superiority of the Egyptians. The Chevalier Canina is also of the same opinion ; and indeed all architects, without exception, pass the same judgment. One is perfectly stupefied on beholding such inexplicable prodigies. At Karnac, at Medinet Habou, not to mention the Pyramids, I have seen stones thirty to forty feet long, placed at heights of forty, fifty, sixty feet, and even more. It seems quite incomprehensible, and, even with the

reality before him, the spectator almost doubts the testimony of his own eyes. By what mechanical means and appliances, easily worked and all-powerful in their operation, can these gigantic masses have been raised to such a height, or extracted and conveyed from quarries fifty leagues distant?

These questions are puzzling enough, but more difficult still remain. It is no easy matter to transport obelisks a hundred feet in height, from place to place ; but let the reader figure to himself what force it must have required to extract colossal figures, ten or twelve feet wide between the shoulders, fifty feet high, and weighing nearly a thousand tons, like that of Rameses, from the quarries of Selseleh, near Assouan, to transport and erect them at a distance of fifty leagues lower down in the plain of Thebes, where they still stand at the present day. If history alone had attested the former existence of such works, without their presence under our eyes, we should not have hesitated to refuse belief to an historian credulous enough to relate such fables. But here are undeniable facts, open to the observation of all travellers, and confirmed by the most exact calculations of the antiquary and critic.

The most surprising thing perhaps, when we reflect, is, that these are no extraordinary efforts in Egyptian art ; we witness only its habitual practice. The obe-

lisks, the colossal figures and stones, are so numerous, that it is clear these are works of ordinary achievement, of which every artist was capable, and which were executed as matter of course. At Sais, at Buto, in the Delta, monolith chapels of granite weighing more than the greatest colossal structures of Thebes, were transported two hundred leagues from the quarries of Upper Egypt. When once embarked on the Nile, we can understand the comparative facility of their transport; but the means of conveying them from the quarry to the river, and thence of disembarking and transporting them to their destination, is a matter of the utmost astonishment.

All the accounts we have of the construction of the Pyramids, and all the fables recounted by Greek and Latin writers, tend to prove that the secret of those skilful, if not scientific, buildings had been lost. But then comes the question, at what period did this secret exist? It assuredly could not have been concealed from the whole population of Egypt, under whose eyes these marvellous works arose, and who were actually employed in constructing them.

Egyptian art invariably proceeds in horizontal courses. This is a very simple principle, and we perceive in this simplicity the infancy of an art which had made little advance; yet this has given it solidity, and enabled it to brave the effects of time. The

Gothic cathedrals, with their endless delicacy and profusion of ornament, will not survive for the ages which Karnac has seen and may still be destined to see. In Egyptian architecture we often find walls twenty-four feet in thickness, with rubble-work composed of stones which we should consider large for cutting. The ceilings are always formed of single blocks, extending from one column to another. The pieces composing a column vary, according to the thickness of the layers. It is remarkable that the Egyptians scarcely ever executed monolith columns, although these would doubtless not have cost them greater effort than many other things which they achieved. They may probably have considered them not sufficiently strong.

The junctures of these stones, almost always at right angles on all their sides, are marvellous; and connoisseurs, like M. Quatremère de Quincy, are warm in their admiration of them. The most experienced and skilful of our builders would probably in vain attempt to imitate them. The arched roof was unknown, or rather useless, to the Egyptians, the ceilings being all horizontal. Where horizontal roofs are made all of a piece, arches are not wanted to give them solidity. In Roman and Grecian edifices, the roof is always the first part to give way, and commence the work of ruin. But the ceilings at Karnac are now as

firm and compact as they were in the time of Sesos-tris, 3000 or 3500 years ago: the stones have not moved an inch, and the colours remain untarnished.

It is true that the Egyptians did not build edifices of more than one story. I do not think a single temple can be found over which a second structure has been raised. The elevation may be considerable (at Karnac it is in some instances a hundred feet high), but it is always simple and single. The Egyptians, with all their power, did not consider themselves able to risk the experiment of a superstructure. Was this the result of calculation on their part? If so, it manifested great prudence and foresight, the necessary result of consummate experience. Was it instinct? If so, the Egyptians were even more highly gifted with genius than has been imagined.

Equal sagacity has been exhibited in the details of the edifices; the doors, for example, are always quadrangular. The pylons are even more solid than the indestructible temples and palaces which they precede. Those which we see injured, have been so by the hand of man; time alone would have made no impression on them. Such stones, placed simply one upon another, and so accurately fitted, are solid as the mountains from which they are extracted; and the careful labour with which they have been faced, renders them still more invulnerable to the action of the

atmosphere, by which the mountains themselves are worn away. These grand and immovable doorways were objects of astonishment to the visitors of Thebes in ancient times; and Homer calls this the city of a hundred gates, Hecatompylos. The apertures made to admit light into the temples are not windows, but merely square holes, in harmony with the rest of the structure, and of the same massive character.

The plans of the temples are uniformly quadrangular. A circular style of building has never been known in Egypt, for the same reason that vaulted roofs never existed. It would not have been solid enough, and perhaps might have offended the eye. The temples may be indefinitely enlarged, but always on the same model. This remark was made by Strabo, who has left us the most detailed and faithful description of them. Attached to all the temples there is the paved court, or *dromos*, which surrounds the building. In the *dromos* is an avenue of sphinxes, in both directions, in two lines facing one another, at twenty cubits' distance. After the *dromos*, which is often planted, and is bounded by walls breast-high, come the propylæa, and then the temple, properly so called. This is composed of two distinct parts,—the *pronaos*, or exterior temple, and the interior one, or sanctuary, the real temple in which the worship, with its attendant mysteries, was performed.

These were the essential elements. The dimensions might be modified, the alleys of sphinxes multiplied, the pronaos extended, the sanctuary enlarged, and two or more entrances to the temple, two or more courts might be added, as at Medinet Habou: the number of edifices, as Strabo says, might be indefinitely enlarged; but it is always easy to see your way along these straight and parallel lines, which vary in extent without ever varying in figure.

One singular fact we may notice,—that no one has ever investigated the system followed in the foundation of these solid structures: travellers are satisfied with seeing them as they stand, without ever inquiring upon what they rest. The sand indeed is a great obstacle, not only burying all the foundations, but frequently the entire edifices to their very roof.

I have thus given a general outline of Egyptian architecture, but it cannot be properly studied without including the examination of a multitude of accessories, which, although not forming part of the edifices themselves, are of importance.

Upon the summit of the Pyramids, which were entirely faced with polished marble, it appears, statues were placed, proportioned to such a pedestal,—doubtless of the monarchs interred beneath these mountains of stone. I am not aware whether the Great Pyramid was ever crowned with a statue of Cheops;



but it is certain that the two Pyramids of the celebrated Lake Moeris had each a colossus of granite upon their summit,—a fact attested by Herodotus, who saw them.\* These two Pyramids were perhaps still higher than the Great Pyramid, descending 250 feet below the level of the lake, and rising as much above it. The colossal statues, which form a remarkable feature in Egyptian art, were sometimes richly ornamented; and it is said that Cambyses stripped from one of them the massy circle of gold which was upon its head.

The Obelisks are also peculiar to Egyptian art. The effect they produce can scarcely be imagined, from seeing an isolated obelisk in one of our public squares. The Obelisks always stood in pairs, in front of the two towers of the pylons, or on each side of the gates of the temples. They must be seen thus to give an idea of what they really are, and especially of their relation to the surrounding monuments. There is certainly as much originality in the idea, as elegance in the execution. I am not aware that the Obelisk has been introduced into any other style of architecture. Such monoliths could scarcely be procured in any country except Egypt; though, if they had been considered a necessary element of ornamentation, they might have been constructed of

\* Euterpe, cap. 149.

different courses. The obelisk appears thus to be peculiar to Egyptian art, and in certain cases it may have a higher value than the column.

The richest feature of Egyptian architecture is perhaps the decoration of the columns, the capitals, cornices, and entablatures, the ceilings and porticos. The caryatides also are an Egyptian invention, which has been introduced into other countries: Grecian architecture employs this ornament, whether original or borrowed, with grand effect.

To the pyramids, obelisks, colossi, and sphinxes with human and animals' heads, must be added those myriads of statuettes found in the tombs, formed of baked earth and bronze, some of which are perfect *chefs-d'œuvre* in point of form and workmanship: charming specimens are seen in our museums. We must likewise include those admirable enamels, which the most skilful goldsmith's art of our days, with all the aids of chemistry, could certainly not surpass, if indeed equal. Of this the specimens which M. Mariette discovered in the Tomb of Apis, now deposited in the Louvre, are a sufficient proof.

But to return to architecture; it may be observed, that the Egyptians gave a polish to the stones which attests the most skilful, and certain, and necessarily the easiest, operations, since they were applied on so large a scale. The statues were not finished with the

chisel, but by polishing, which almost entirely precluded the imitation of the varied relief of the flesh and the play of the muscles ; but it was a means of preserving the material. It was in harmony with that ever-during solidity which the Egyptians appear to have studied more than any other quality.

The edifices, when completed, required to be polished, to render them capable of receiving the sculptured hieroglyphics and bas-reliefs. The relative perfection of these works, which are also peculiar to Egypt, is partly attributable to the polish of the stone. The sandstones of Selseleh were well adapted to receive this, although their grain is not naturally very fine. The granites took the most admirable polish ; but they were only used for colossi and obelisks, and inscriptions were rarely engraved on them. Limestone, which is capable of receiving almost as good a polish, was scarcely employed in these edifices, which were intended to last as long as the world itself. Limestone is well enough adapted to our ephemeral architecture, but did not at all suit the Egyptian, unless piled up in heaps, as in the Pyramids of Ghizeh.

I shall conclude these remarks on Egyptian architecture by giving a brief summary of its principal features. It will be seen that I appreciate it highly. I think it second only to the architecture of Greece.

Much as I admire the Gothic, I think that, if only from its more recent date, it must be regarded as inferior. Our Middle-Age enthusiasts must pardon this heresy. The Gothic has great and undoubted merits; but, in a purely technical view, I question whether these merits are of equal value with those of Egyptian art.

Notwithstanding my great admiration for the architecture of Thebes, Denderah, and the Pyramids, I agree in opinion with M. Quatremère de Quincy and P. Paolo, the collaborator of Winckelmann. Egyptian architecture can never serve as a model, since its artists worked without rules, properly so called, although subjected to the severest discipline. It has no Orders, because it has no fixed proportions, no systematic combinations, except those prescribed by certain religious and political principles, which have no relation to the principles of art and beauty. An Order of architecture is the result of the most scientific analyses, and the most extensive experience and intelligence. The Greeks were almost the only people who understood these depths of science and thoughtful practice. Neither in Egypt, nor in any other country, is there anything similar; and this, among many others, is a distinguishing characteristic of Grecian art in reference to the true and the beautiful.

I should not say, with M. Quatremère de Quincy,

that Egyptian architecture is enormous because of its impotence, that it is devoid of all sentiment of the beautiful, and can boast neither grace nor richness. This judgment seems to me rather severe; and, notwithstanding the diffidence I feel in questioning the opinions of such an authority, I cannot in this instance acquiesce in its sentence. M. Quatremère would perhaps himself have modified it, had he visited the spot, and received a direct impression from those grand objects upon the sites for which they were created. In other respects I readily concur in his exclusive preference for Grecian art, for its superiority, purity, and originality.

It is true that great grandeur may consist with great inferiority to the Greeks; and I think that, although ranking Egyptian architecture much below its rival, M. Quatremère de Quincy will have contributed more than any one to give it still a very high place. For my part, I owe to him my own appreciation of it, by his initiating me a little into its mysteries.

I repeat,—who would have conceived the possibility, without the direct testimony, not of history, but of these eternal monuments, which bear their own date and explanation, that, four thousand years ago, in a country now a desert, and constantly threatened with the encroachments of the sands, in such a latitude, in the heart of Africa, 250 leagues distant from the

shores of the Mediterranean (Ipsamboul and the temples of Nubia still further),—Art could have created such marvellous productions? In this view Thebes was even more amazing than fame has represented it to the astonished world.

In conclusion, I proceed to consider the remarkable exception mentioned above.

Among the admirable discoveries made by M. Mariette in the Serapeum of Memphis, the most surprising, in my opinion, is the statue of the Hierogrammaticus, which is now deposited in one of the halls of our Egyptian Museum at the Louvre. M. Mariette extracted it from one of those most ancient tombs amidst which passed the famous avenue of Sphinxes seen by Strabo, and discovered by our fellow-countryman at a depth of eighty feet under the sand. This stone statue, covered with a red coating, represents a man in a sitting posture, with crossed legs, and a scroll of papyrus upon his right knee, on which his hand rests, and holding the calamus, the instrument of his profession. His head is raised, and his eyes, very artistically formed, are looking into the distance.

This statue is of a style perfectly different from anything in Egyptian art: it is a sculpture,—a study and imitation of the human body and of nature, such as the Greeks conceived it, and such as we now under-

stand it. It belongs to quite another world than that of Thebes, Denderah, and the Pyramids.

To what remote age can this statue, with ten or twelve others conceived in the same spirit, be assigned? Whence does it come, and what has produced it,—a phenomenon at variance with all we know and have seen of Egyptian art? Egyptian scholars of the highest authority answer unhesitatingly, that this singular statue belongs, with the surrounding monuments, to the fifth or sixth dynasty. According to the calculations of M. Lenormant, the fifth dynasty began to reign B.C. 4073; and this speaking figure, as M. de Rougé says, whose features are so strongly stamped with individuality, a true portrait, in short, may have existed six thousand years.

Six thousand years! Mark the inference from this calculation. Before the period when Egyptian art was such as it is now known to us, subject to those conventional laws of which Plato speaks, devoid of freedom or the possibility of progress, Art existed in an entirely different form,—the true one, unfettered, and in the same path which led to Grecian beauty and the perfection of Phidias.

I conclude these remarks at a point which might perhaps lead to hypothesis and chimera; but I wished to notice this new glimpse into the original elements of Egyptian art. It seems like an unparalleled fact

in the history of the human mind : such a permanent prostration of the genius of art, under the orders of despotism, would be one of the most astonishing anomalies in history.

Egypt, with all the mysteries attaching to her history, has, in my opinion, wonders in store which we little suspect, although with Champollion's aid we have learned to decipher her hieroglyphics and some of her enigmas.



## LETTER XI.

## SUEZ AND ITS COMMERCE.

Lake Timsah, Dec. 26th, 1855.

WE quitted Suez on the 21st of December, and started on our journey across the Isthmus. I shall hereafter have occasion to advert to the successful results of our expedition, but I must first speak of the town of Suez, and the state of its commerce.

At the present day Suez is a place of little importance; but it merits attention, for the sake of the great development it will undoubtedly receive, when the canal between the Red Sea and the Mediterranean shall be opened, and the commerce of Asia with the rest of the world shall thus find an easy and expeditious channel. It will hereafter be a matter of curiosity to recall what Suez was before this grand enterprise opened a path to its prosperity, and converted it into a populous and civilized city.

The Commissioners reached Suez on the morning of December 16th. They immediately set to work, and devoted four days to an examination of the roadstead, which may be regarded as one of the best on the globe. I accompanied the engineers in all their excursions, and availed myself also of this visit, to collect some commercial statistics, the results of which I shall here give.

On arriving at Suez from Cairo, the view of the town, poor-looking as it is, cannot fail to give the traveller pleasure, after the melancholy impression produced on him by a journey of thirty-two leagues across the most arid desert it is possible to conceive. There are indeed in this desert sixteen post-stations; but, with the exception of the palace constructed by the extravagance of Abbas Pasha in this desolate country, and the fortress of Ajerout seen on the horizon, the eye encounters no human or living object, and reposes with a kind of charm on the first habitations it discovers.

The town of Suez is open and exposed on nearly every side; the entrance-gate is dilapidated, and little worthy of the place, which, with the exception of Cairo, surpasses all the Arab towns on the banks of the Nile. It has spacious squares, large storehouses, a quay upon the seashore, and houses which, although falling into ruin, are constructed in great part of ex-

cellent materials, taken from the Attaka, a mountain to the south-east of the roadstead, and from the quarries of Mesalle, on the opposite side of the Gulf, not far from the Wells of Moses.

Suez does not contain a single monument to invite a visit. In 1798, General Bonaparte made an excursion hither, and wished to see for himself the point where the Canal which he projected (and which we shall now probably succeed in forming) would terminate. I entered the house in which he lodged with his Staff; it contains no memento of him except his name, and belongs to a Christian merchant, who has hung the walls of the divan in which the General reposed with European engravings, representing the principal scenes in his life,—among the rest, his Adieu to his Guards in 1814.

From this small house, which is better kept up than the rest, I went to see, at the other end of the town, the ruins of a battery, which the French army erected to protect the bottom of the roadstead. There still remain some vestiges of this work, which was perhaps never mounted; but the ramparts of earth are overthrown, and it required the practised eyes of an able engineer officer who accompanied us to trace them upon the ground.

Suez has nearly five thousand inhabitants: I confess that, from its small extent, I should not have ima-

gined it contained more than a third of that number. But it is truly marvellous to see such a swarm of human beings collected in this place.

Suez has not a single drop of water ; the nearest supply, from the oasis of the Wells of Moses, is at a distance of more than three leagues, and this is only fit for the camels to drink. The inhabitants therefore obtain their supply of better water from double that distance, and from the reservoirs which collect the rain-water when it falls. As this is by no means abundant, and is not unfrequently exhausted, water has often to be fetched still further. The supply we took with us, in our excursion across the Isthmus, came from Cairo ; and, as our caravan was very numerous, consisting of nearly a hundred persons, our provision of water loaded thirty-five camels. Suez could not furnish a sufficient quantity. But only let the reader imagine the state of a town, of five thousand inhabitants, destitute of the least resource to satisfy this indispensable want. The town of Suez has likewise not a tree, a blade of grass, or a flower ; and many of its inhabitants are born and pass their lives without having an idea of verdure and vegetation. As a necessary consequence of such a state of things, the water-market has gained an unusual importance, and the precious liquid is sometimes sold at exorbitant prices. Times of frightful scarcity have

been mentioned to me, when a pint of water has fetched twopence or threepence, and was even then sold only in small quantities.

It is clear that, without some imperious necessity, people would not have submitted to so serious an inconvenience. A town would never have been founded, or have existed, in this inhospitable spot, had it been possible to find a better site for it. But Suez is the nearest point on the coast to Cairo; and, without relinquishing all the commerce of the Red Sea, it is there, and there only, that the entrepôt for the reception and transport of this commerce could be situated. The desert extends far and wide around, but in this direction it is of less extent, and leads to a great city of 300,000 inhabitants, the capital of Egypt.

Such was the origin of Suez in remote times, and such the causes which maintain it, in spite of all the elements of destruction which threaten it.

It is true that the roadstead of Suez is most favourably circumstanced. The alternating winds, the monsoons which prevail at the entrance of the Red Sea towards Aden, and over the whole of the Indian Ocean, are not felt at fifty leagues from the head of the Gulf; and, as it contracts gradually, its northern extremity is in general perfectly calm.

Tempests are unknown in these parts, and are thought dangerous simply because they are unknown.

The north wind, which prevails there during four-fifths of the year, and the south-west wind, are never violent. I may mention a fact which proves this decisively. The captain of the English corvette 'Zenobia,' which serves as the store of coals for the steamers, told us that during the three years his vessel has been anchored there, she has never sustained any damage, nor has her communication with land ever been interrupted. She is anchored more than a league out at sea, with a depth of six or seven fathoms. I know not whether as much can be said of any other roadstead. The anchorage is perfectly firm, with a clay bottom, which is found, at nearly the same depth, throughout the Isthmus, as far as Pelusium : this fact we ascertained from the borings made by the International Commission. Ships even of the largest tonnage have therefore nothing to fear in approaching Suez ; and, in proportion as that sea shall become more frequented, its navigation will be more safe and easy.

At present Suez is never visited by any large ships, excepting those of the Peninsular and Oriental Company, and the East India Company, to the number of forty annually. The rest of the commerce is transported in native barques, some of a hundred-tons burden, which have retained the form they had two thousand years ago ; just as the merchants have kept

to the usages of their ancestors in the times of the Ptolemies, and even of the Pharaohs. The building of these barques, which are of solid construction although mostly undecked, is one of the chief sources of profit to Suez, and employs a large portion of the population.

The three sources of labour and wealth to the town of Suez are, the commerce of the Red Sea, that of India by the mail-packets, and lastly the transport of the pilgrims to Mecca.

The commerce of the Red Sea is limited to certain points on the coast : on the west, Kosseir, Souakin, Massouah, the coast of the Somauli and Zanzibar ; on the east, Tor, Yambo, and especially Jeddah, where all the products of the Gulf are collected before being transported to Suez, and which is the only port for those of the Hedjaz and Yemen.

Kosseir supplies Jeddah with corn, wheat, and barley, beans, flour, various grains and vegetables, and also cotton goods. It is the nearest port on the Red Sea to the Nile, which is only twenty-two leagues distant; and these products come from the fertile valley of Egypt. The exports of Kosseir in 1852 amounted in value to 3,291,518 francs. The imports, which consisted chiefly of coffee, wax, and wood for building, were only of the value of about 660,000 francs, exclusive of the odious traffic in slaves, abolished by

Mohammed Said, previously even to the firman of the Sultan, and which represented an amount of 232,576 francs.

Souakin, south of Kosseir, receives the commerce of the White River, one of the affluents, or rather branches, of the Nile. The centre of its commerce is still at Kartoum, at the southern extremity of Sou-dan; but there are symptoms of its removal; and, as at Kosseir, the traffic in these remote countries is carried on rather by sea, even at a considerable distance, than by the difficult navigation of the Nile above the Cataracts, and the land-transport.

The Red Sea is the route which Europeans generally take on their way to explore the White Nile. On board the 'Osiris' steamer, in which we sailed from Marseilles to Alexandria, was an adventurous merchant, who was going for the third time into these barbarous countries, passing by Suez and the Red Sea on his way.

Souakin furnishes gum, senna, tortoise-shell, elephants' teeth, ostrich-feathers, sheep and ox hides, etc.

Massouah, situated far below Souakin, is the port of Abyssinia, a country in which European (and especially French) establishments multiply continually. The principal products exported from Massouah are coffee, wax, musk, cocoa-nuts, elephants' teeth, and ostrich-feathers: in addition to these are the oxen sent



in considerable quantities and at very low prices to Aden, and the mules which are sent to the islands of Bourbon and Mauritius.

The island of Massouah, which was also a very important point for the traffic in slaves, is the only port on this coast. It belongs, as well as Souakin, to the Turkish Government, which has retaken possession of these two positions by virtue of the Treaty of 1841, which ceded to the Porte the Hedjaz, on the other side of the Red Sea. The Hedjaz may be considered ill-placed in the hands of the Porte, as the recent troubles at Mecca testify: it is much more difficult to quell such disturbances from Constantinople than from Cairo. It is still more incomprehensible that Souakin should not belong to Egypt, and Massouah to Abyssinia. Meanwhile the Turkish Government levies a duty of twelve per cent. on all the merchandise shipped in either port.

The coast of the Somaui sends to Jeddah, and thence to Suez, incense, myrrh, gum-elemi, and sandarach. Zanzibar sends gum-copal, yellow wax, rhinoceros-horns, cloves, cocoa, etc.

Such is the commerce of the western coast of the Red Sea: that of the eastern coast is much more important, as the coffee produced there is the principal commodity. As no other town on the Red Sea contains mercantile houses, Jeddah has the whole

of this traffic. The merchants of Jeddah, although few in number, have their agents in all the ports; and these agents naturally monopolize all the commodities for their patrons. Jeddah moreover contains only Arabian houses, whose agencies extend to India. There is only one Christian establishment, the Greek firm of Saoua, which is the richest of all; it placed itself last year under the protection of France.

Jeddah contains from twelve to fifteen thousand inhabitants. The Hedjaz supplies it only with gum, mother-of-pearl shells, and a small quantity of black and white wool. But Yemen, or Arabia Felix, which is much more productive than the Hedjaz, supplies Jeddah with the famous Mocha coffee, gum, yellow wax, tortoise-shell, mother-of-pearl, sheep and goat skins, senna, etc.

The coffee which goes by the name of Mocha no longer comes from the place of that name, although the port is a safe one: it now comes by Hodeida and Loheia; and, to all appearance, it will soon cease to be brought from any Arabian port. Since the English have established themselves at Aden, the exportation of coffee has been gradually diverted thither, and the commerce of these countries with India seems likely to take that direction. Aden, which is a considerable military station, may in time become no less important for its commerce. In 1839, when the English

took possession of it, the place contained a thousand inhabitants; in 1845 the number had risen to twenty thousand, exclusive of the soldiers and marines. At the present time, the population may, without exaggeration, be estimated at twenty-five to thirty thousand.

Besides the commerce of the Red Sea, Jeddah has also that of Persia, in carpets and pinchbeck, and lastly that of India, which passes almost entirely through Jeddah, in spite of the competition with which it is threatened by Aden. About twenty large ships arrive annually at Jeddah from the East Indies: these sail under the English flag, although they all belong to Hindoos. They carry pilgrims for Mecca, and merchandise, the chief article of which is perhaps rice (200,000 sacks of 165 lbs. each), sandal-wood, ebony, and timber for building, Malabar and Java pepper, indigo, turmeric, tin from Singapore, and benzoin, basil, cardamom, various essences, nutmegs, cinnamon from Ceylon, Malabar ginger, black cotton drawers from Surat, silk and gold stuffs called *shahi*, cashmirs, Chinese porcelain, etc.

Such are the articles which supply the commerce of Jeddah, and are transported thence to Suez, to be dispersed over Egypt and Europe. Although this traffic is nothing in comparison with the immense interchange of commodities and capital in European com-

merce, as the above details are, I believe, little known, they are not without interest. It is not generally supposed that, in these almost barbarous countries, there is so much commercial activity, or that they contribute so largely to the requirements of civilized life. In 1852, the imports and exports between Suez and Jeddah amounted in value to about 10,334,302 francs, without reckoning passengers, or the merchandise, from India and China, consigned to the merchants of Suez by the Peninsular and Oriental Company. This merchandise, which forms quite a special class, consists of indigo, cashmir and cotton shawls, toys, China crapes, silk handkerchiefs, various stuffs, and even printed Korans. The greater part is taken by the European markets. In 1851 the value amounted to 843,238 francs ; since that time it has much more than doubled.

To confirm the accuracy of these figures, and satisfy any political economists who may use them, I should add whence they are obtained. As Suez is only a place of transit, and the really commercial towns are Jeddah, and Cairo, or Alexandria, it is in these places that the *reftiehs*, or bulletins declaring the nature and price of the merchandise, are delivered. The Custom-house of Suez keeps no register or detailed account of them : it merely visés the *reftiehs*, noting the weight in *rottes*, or pounds of the country.

The merchandise of the Peninsular and Oriental Company pays one-half per cent. transit-duty to Alexandria, according to the bills of lading and the declarations of the agents of the Company, if its destination is Europe; and at Suez, an entrance-duty of five per cent., if it is for consumption in Egypt, Syria, or Turkey. The figures I have quoted above are taken from these documents; and as far as they go they may be regarded as perfectly accurate.

From 1852 to 1855, including the last year, the commerce of Suez continued to increase considerably, after Mehemet Ali relinquished the monopoly. The number of camel-loads which, going and returning, passed from Suez to Cairo in 1849, was about 70,000; in 1852 it was 91,500; and in the present year it will probably exceed 120,000. The camels are three entire days in journeying from Suez to Cairo, arriving on the fourth day. From Cairo to Suez the journey costs twelve francs a camel, and twenty francs during the period of the pilgrimage. From Suez to Cairo it is cheaper,—usually from seven to ten francs. We shall therefore not be wrong in taking ten francs as an average for the journey; and consequently a sum of 1,100,000 or 1,200,000 francs may be added to the amount of the commercial activity of Suez. Every Fellah-camel carries a load of from five to six hundred pounds. The camels, or rather dromedaries,

of the Bedouins are not so strong, but swifter. Four or five camels are required to carry a ton ; and we should be near the truth in taking as the number of tons a fourth of the number of animals which transport them.

In this brief sketch of the commerce of Suez, I have only regarded it from a material point of view ; but I wish to advert to the moral conditions connected with it. It is not only the wealth and prosperity which civilization would bring to the shores of the Red Sea, which ought to excite our interest : it would accomplish but half its work, were it not to endeavour to introduce likewise order and justice. Great difficulty will attend the attempt to change the inveterate bad morality which at present prevails ; but if civilization only facilitates commerce, and infuses a spirit of honesty into commercial transactions even to the same extent as this exists among us, a highly important and laudable work will have been accomplished ; one of far greater difficulty than the opening of the Isthmus from one sea to the other.

## LETTER XII.

## SUEZ AND ITS COMMERCE.

Lake Timsah, Dec. 26th, 1855.

BEFORE entering upon the considerations adverted to at the close of my last Letter, I shall complete my account of the commerce of Suez, by giving some particulars relating to the steamers to India and the pilgrims to Mecca.

Twice a month the ships of the Peninsular and Oriental Company sail, one from Bombay and one from Calcutta, carrying, besides the Indian Mail, passengers, and light and valuable merchandise. The East India Company had formerly their own service between Bombay and Suez; but they have found it better to relinquish this, and to entrust the carriage of their despatches to the Peninsular Company. They send vessels to Suez whenever they judge necessary; one of their steamers, for instance, is coming to re-

ceive on board the new Governor-General of India, Lord Canning, to whom we paid a visit on his way to Cairo.

The roadstead of Suez is visited by forty or fifty English ships annually, which arrive as regularly as the long passage permits. To these must be added five or six other ships, which, doubling the Cape of Good Hope, bring the supply of coal for the Peninsular Company. The East India Company bring their coal by way of Alexandria; and from Cairo to Suez by land. In 1855 the transport of this fuel required above 25,000 camels, and assuredly the Government of India will not find the opening of the Isthmus a useless enterprise.

In 1855 the exact number of English vessels was fifty-two: of these, twenty-three came from Calcutta, and twenty-two from Bombay. Two sailed from Aden, and five arrived direct from England. The number increases from year to year.

As soon as the Indian steamer is in sight in the roadstead of Suez, it is signalled by the telegraph to Alexandria, and all preparations are made to expedite the journey of the English passengers. During their passage across Egypt a perfect hurricane prevails: the country seems to belong to them, to be given up to their convenience. All the means of transport, from Suez to Cairo, and from Cairo to the



port of Alexandria, are at their exclusive command. On our arrival in Egypt we had to wait three days, until the only line of rail was free, lest our train should interfere with that of the English travellers, hourly expected. Now that the railroad is open as far as Cairo, the public service will naturally have precedence over this special service, to which hitherto everything has been made subordinate.

The steamer which I saw at Suez, on the 20th of December, brought only seventy passengers, and merchandise: the former are usually more numerous,—sometimes double that number. On an average, nearly 1800 travellers pass annually from Europe to Asia, and a still greater number return. In 1849, the number of travellers going to India was 1063, and of those returning, 1349. Since then it has greatly increased; and in 1855, the number amounted to 5500, going and returning.

The Egyptian Government undertook, by the treaty concluded with the Company, to land and convey the travellers and merchandise from the Mediterranean to the Red Sea, and *vice versá*. The treaty however expires this year; and, in consequence of some practical difficulties, the Egyptian Government will in future receive and transport travellers and merchandise by land only, without landing or putting them on board.

The completion of the railroad from Cairo to Suez

will greatly facilitate this traffic. The journey is now performed by post, which is very well served, from Cairo to the Red Sea, in ten or twelve hours. The execution of this excellent route is due to the English and Abbas Pasha; it was planned by M. Linant Bey, our present companion and guide.

From the English travellers, I pass to the pilgrims to Mecca, whom I shall mention briefly, not having had an opportunity of witnessing the passage of the great caravan, which is sometimes composed of five or six thousand camels.

Mecca, besides being a holy spot, visited from motives of piety by the Faithful, is also a considerable market. Many of the pilgrims are also merchants, who combine the temporal profits of the journey with its spiritual benefits: they arrive annually from all parts of Islam, and the most distant Mussulman countries. The number of those who, leaving the grand caravan to proceed by land, pass by way of Suez, is comparatively small; in 1852, they amounted to only about 4300, whilst Kosseir alone sent 10,455. At Suez they embark, and the fare for the passage varies with the place on board the vessel. The charge is never very high; the first places do not exceed sixty francs for a passage of two hundred leagues to Jeddah, whilst there are some berths for which not more than ten francs are paid. These prices yield small profits to the

shipowners of Suez, but on the other hand they are regular and certain.

Such then are the sources of the commerce of Suez : the products of the countries bordering on the Red Sea ; merchandise from India and China, and that which Cairo sends in return, both of home and foreign manufacture ; and lastly, the conveyance of English travellers and Mussulman pilgrims. These various branches of commerce cause a circulation of some forty millions of francs ; and hence the reader may imagine what Suez will become when the canal is opened.

The present state of the trade has however its dark side. In the first place, all the merchandise passing to and from Europe, is subjected to heavy charges, which absorb the greater part of the legitimate profits that might be expected. In addition to the losses incurred from damage in a detestable navigation, there are charges for weighing, warehousing, keep, commissions of every kind, at Jeddah, Suez, Cairo, and Alexandria ; not to mention custom-house dues, paid at the European ports. I take Suez as an illustration of the present state of commerce in these countries, and give the result of my personal observation. The goods, packed in palm-leaf sacks, are landed in very bad condition. On being removed from the quay, they are warehoused in the *okels*, or vast storehouses, the dimensions of which, larger than are required at the present

day, show how flourishing must have formerly been the market of Suez. To the charges thus necessarily incurred in the first instance, are added those of weighing, and especially of repairing the packages, which indeed adds but little to their strength or security. When the merchandise is removed from the okels, the same charges are paid again: repairing the packages which the warehousing has injured, commission, transport, etc. When the goods reach Cairo, the whole of these charges are repeated, warehousing, removal, etc. etc., and the same again at Alexandria.

Notwithstanding all these precautions, which are very ill-taken, the owner is never sure of his merchandise retaining its original quality and quantity. The Arabs who conduct the caravan in its passage through the Desert, are singularly cunning; and the adulterations and fraudulent tricks they practise, although less adroit, are not less mischievous than those we suffer from at home.

When the sea-canal opens a passage for merchandise from Suez to Pelusium, without transhipment, an incalculable saving of time and needless expense, as well as the prevention of these losses by fraud, will be effected. In this country indeed the advantages of these reforms are little appreciated, especially as regards the value of time. This, which is regarded in Europe as one of the most precious commodities, is

here prized the least, and squandered with an indifference which no motives even of self-interest or cupidity can stimulate.

The two hundred or two hundred and fifty barques, which carry on the traffic between Suez and Jeddah, representing an aggregate of twelve or fifteen thousand tons, never sail by night. They take shelter every evening in some creek, and continue their voyage in the morning. If, in the course of the day, the wind is at all rough, they put back again. A day is thus lost, but of this they think nothing: immemorial tradition, and habit, if not fear, teaches this prudence; and an obstinate prejudice prevails against having any compass on board, which might enable the pilot to venture a little distance from the coast.

Such is the voyage to Jeddah; the return is far worse. The north wind, which prevails almost constantly at the head of the Gulf, favours the departure, but impedes the return; and the precautions taken are redoubled,—not from cowardice, but routine. The pilots I have seen, and who were interrogated by the Commissioners regarding the laws of the winds and waters in the roadstead, were of a robust frame, and very intelligent: they would easily make excellent and intrepid sailors; but they simply do as their fathers did before them, and in no country has use and habit, however absurd, such invincible power.

But these wretched barques, with all their unskilful management, had until recently, dangers of another and still more formidable kind to encounter. Unless they duly paid tribute to the Bedouins on either shore, they were subject to pillage; and, as they could not face at once perils both by sea and land, they submitted to the disgraceful tribute, and purchased exemption from the attacks of these brigands of the Desert. This tax therefore was the first subtraction to be made from the value of the freight. Matters remained in this state until the time of Mehemet Ali, who by his firmness and resolution put an end to it; and, at the present day, the barques of the Red Sea, which in 1855 numbered at Suez 245, have no longer any enemy to fear but the sea, which may be mastered by skill and courage.

The sailors of Jeddah and Suez moreover scarcely deserve the reproach of weakness in submitting to this tax,—having a precedent and example in high quarters. Until recently (if not to the present day) the Sultan himself has paid a similar tribute to the Arab tribes, through which the caravan from Damascus to the holy city passes; and the annual cost of this protection for the pilgrims amounts on an average to eighty or a hundred thousand francs.

Within the last two years, a similar occurrence took place at the very gates of Suez, on the road to Cairo.

This road has always been safe for Europeans, protected by the formidable power of their respective Governments; but the poor Fellahs travelling upon it were robbed remorselessly, and occasionally the great caravan itself was plundered. In order to secure some protection,—although seldom effective,—they paid a certain sum to some of the Bedouin chiefs, who undertook to act the part of a police among their followers. It is asserted that Abbas Pasha himself paid this tribute to the day of his death. Mohammed Said refused to pay it, as a disgrace to the Government; and for some months after his accession, robberies and assassinations of the Fellahs recommenced on the road to Suez. The Egyptian Government has repressed these disorders energetically: soldiers are attached to each of the sixteen stations on the road, and they have with them a Bedouin, whose business it is to discover the offenders when any crimes are committed. This kind of protector and spy is paid five or six francs a month, beside his regular rations.

The road is now rendered secure to the Fellahs as well as to Europeans: hostages are required of the neighbouring tribes, who are detained in the fortress of Cairo, and are taken from the most influential families.

When the Government itself is reduced to such extreme measures, it is natural for individuals to have

recourse to similar means of defence, in a country where it is so difficult to establish an efficient police, and the local character of which so greatly favours crime.

Most of the opulent families, who have something to lose and can afford to pay, were obliged to put themselves under the venal protection of a Bedouin. If it happened that any one of the family was injured in his person, or robbed, or even merely insulted, the Bedouin had to discover and punish the offender. As soon as he was made acquainted with the offence he set out, and pursued the delinquent until he discovered him, even if the pursuit should occupy a whole year. A country-house to which we went in a neighbouring oasis, was found pillaged, by its owner, who conducted us to it on his return from an absence of some months. The depredation had been committed by some roving Arabs of the vicinity; and I saw the Bedouin who is charged with the punishment of the culprits: he is a man of large stature and great vigour, such being generally selected for this kind of employment. Several traits of courage in the execution of his dangerous duty, were told me; amongst others the following.

In 1850, a child belonging to this same family was insulted by some Bedouins who had come to the oasis to water their camels. One of them had boxed the



child's ears, because he tried to prevent their entering a closed shed. As soon as the fact was known, the protector of the family instantly set out, taking behind him on his dromedary his son, a lad seven years old. Having tracked the offender, he went fearlessly into the tribe to which the man belonged, challenged him in the face of all his people, flung him on the ground, and cut off his hand. Whilst this punishment was being inflicted, the Bedouin's little boy, at his father's side, insulted the conquered man, reproached him with his crime, and taunted him. In this manner the father executed the service which he had sworn to fulfil, and brought up his son to the heritage which he doubtless intended to bequeath to him.

These external difficulties would seem to offer quite enough obstacles to the growth or the peaceable maintenance of the commerce of Suez ; but in addition, it has had to contend with most unreasonable regulations. Until last year, the absurd restrictions relative to the sailing of the barques, continued in force : no barque, large or small, could depart but in the order of its arrival ; though it might have its whole cargo on board, it could not sail until all those which preceded it had departed. Some barques, it is said, have remained for three years, unable to sail. One exception only to this unjust and antiquated usage was admitted : those barques built at Suez took precedence

immediately, under the plea of encouraging the ship-building of the place. Their owners consequently obtained whatever freight they demanded of the merchants, who were ruined by delays, so that their first voyage was sure to repay all they had cost. At the instance of the French Consul, Mohammed Said suppressed this odious exaction.

A measure of another kind, but equally bad in spirit, prohibited foreign vessels from lading at Suez. Few enough arrived, previously to this prohibition; but the prevention of all competition was an effectual bar to commercial enterprise. In 1839 the East India Company presented to the Viceroy two superb elephants, which were shipped to Suez on board the 'Colombo.' This ship, which had made a voyage of more than two thousand leagues to convey this diplomatic present to the Prince, could not even obtain from him the trifling favour of an exceptional permission. The ship was obliged to return without being allowed to take on board any portion of her cargo. Since that time the prohibition has been removed, and foreign vessels arriving at Suez can now load as freely as at Alexandria.

It may readily be conceived that a trade subjected to such capricious restrictions, could not thrive much, and was fatally crippled by these economical errors. Under the anarchical violence of the Mamelukes, com-

merce languished, almost to extinction. During the first years of the reign of Mehemet Ali, little was done to revive it ; and the avaricious but unwise monopoly, in nine years, from 1830 to 1839, reduced the imports of coffee alone from 44,000 lbs. to 11,000 lbs. After the abolition of the monopoly, the trade revived : in ten years it has certainly more than tripled. I may add that, in the year 1855, the importation of coffee alone will amount to above 78,000 lbs.

I may be excused for dwelling at such length on these statistical and commercial details : on the eve of an event from which will date a new era in commerce, I wish to show what is the present state of things. This will, I hope, undergo a rapid change ; and what I have yet to say, respecting the Isthmus and Pelusium, will prove that the enterprise to which I refer, ought to be regarded as practicable, since after a careful local investigation, it has been sanctioned and approved by scientific men.

## LETTER XIII.

## THE DESERT.

Ruins of Pelusium, Dec. 29th, 1855.

IN scarcely eight days' march, and after six encampments, we have completely explored the Isthmus of Suez. We have crossed the Desert, almost constantly following the line along which the sea-canal is to pass. I would gladly give the reader an idea of the impressions we experienced in traversing these solitudes, but it is very difficult to form a correct notion of them from any description. They appeared to us far less formidable than is commonly imagined. It is true that we had facilities not enjoyed by all travellers; but this is only a reason for seeing them more thoroughly, and I do not think you know the sea the less for crossing it in a good ship. The problem in this case is perfectly analogous; it simply consists in prudently providing an abundance of all that is ne-

cessary for the expedition. We had an accomplished guide in Linant Bey, who has crossed this region twenty times, and has lived here for many years. Thanks to his own experience and the liberality of the Viceroy, he has not let us want for anything.

I am not speaking of the desert extending from Cairo to Suez, which is nearly as long as that from Suez to Pelusium. It is frightful; but it is crossed so quickly that the traveller has scarcely time to perceive the horrors of it. After journeying five hours in a carriage, we stopped near nightfall at the eighth station, opposite to which is Bar-el-Beda, the palace of Abbas Pasha, where we found an excellent repast and very good lodging. We had already travelled halfway, and we accomplished the rest the next morning with still greater ease. The desert from Cairo to Suez presents no difficulty whatever. Travellers of every kind, without distinction, may have the same accommodation on their journey as we had, and the railroad will soon open to every one precisely the same advantages of speed and comfort.

The expedition across the desert from Suez to Pelusium, which has no highway nor carriages like the other, appeared more difficult; and it was necessary to adopt other means for its execution.

Our caravan was composed of a hundred and seventy camels, not including our dromedaries and asses. We

had twenty tents, and, including our attendants, our European servants, Fellahs, and Arabs, we formed a troop of nearly a hundred persons. We broke up our camp at about five o'clock in the morning, having slept upon mats and good mattresses, and started at daybreak, or soon after. We breakfasted at about eleven, in the open air, leaning against our camels, and with our backs to the sun. At noon we resumed our journey, halting at three o'clock for the camp to be pitched for the night, and the dinner to be prepared by six o'clock, in the tent which served as our dining-room.

There is certainly nothing very intolerable in this mode of travelling. As the weather was extremely fine, without a day of rain, as the sun, though splendid, was not scorching, as no one was either fatigued or ill, and as the results of our exploring were daily more favourable, we were in constant high spirits; and the recollections of this journey will be amongst the most agreeable of our lives.

This desert, now abandoned, was formerly, if not much inhabited, at least much frequented. We everywhere found considerable traces of the works, and even of the abodes, of man. I can only incidentally mention, among these remains, three Persepolitan monuments, doubtless of the time of Cambyses: one of which is four or five leagues distant from Suez, buried

in the sand ; a second stands on the site of the ancient Cambysis, at the entrance to the basin of the Bitter Lakes, and a third at the Serapeum, near the centre of the Isthmus, a little south of Lake Timsah. Unfortunately these lay out of our route, and I describe only what I saw.

At the distance of half a league at most from Suez is seen the small hill of Tel-el-Glismel, which appears to be the ancient Clysma. There have been as yet no excavations to verify this hypothesis ; but, at a short distance, a long piece of stonework is seen on the seacoast, which dates from the time of the Greeks. This was apparently the quay where the barques of the canal of the Nile came to unload, for transhipment on board those of the Red Sea. On the 21st of December, the day of our departure, after journeying for about two hours, we stopped to breakfast at a spot where the vestiges of the ancient canal of the Pharaohs begin to be visible. Here was also the third of the borings of our engineers, who now examined the results.

During the rest of this journey we proceeded along the bed of the ancient canal, which has mostly the enormous width of 160 to 200 feet ; its sides are in parts fifteen or twenty feet high. We encamped at Chalouf-et-Tarraba ; and I passed the time occupied in pitching the tents, in examining the surface of these

banks. At a slight depth I found the earth formerly thrown out of the bed of the canal, consolidated into a hard, compact mass, which might easily have been taken for masonry.

On the morning of the 22nd we still followed these traces, which remained equally visible, nor did we lose sight of them until we reached the basin of the Bitter Lakes, which fed the ancient, as it must also the new, canal.

The large basin of the Bitter Lakes, along which we journeyed one whole day, is now completely dry. The sea formerly covered these parts, and has left unquestionable vestiges of its presence. Shells are constantly found on the surface of the ground, of species still inhabiting the Red Sea and the Mediterranean. The soil is impregnated with salt to a considerable depth; and the water accumulated at the bottom of the holes, in the third and fourth borings, was more intensely saline than that of the sea, and as much so as that which we afterwards tasted from Lake Timsah.

It is, I believe, the saline exhalations, arising from the soil, that imparts to the dew, which covers the bushes in the morning, a pungency almost intolerable to the taste. This dew is very abundant, and being somewhat viscous, it has been conjectured that it was the manna spoken of in the Bible. I have tried to



drink it several times, and I can imagine that to parched throats it may not be unpalatable. But it must always have a bitter taste ; and, although it may yield a little nourishment for a short time, I doubt whether it would be possible to live upon it even a day or two.

But I am speaking of bushes as if we were not in the desert. On our journey from Cairo to Suez, we amused ourselves with counting the trees we saw to our great surprise at intervals near the highway. In a distance of thirty-two leagues we noticed in all fourteen, stunted and distorted. Here the trees have ceased, but the brushwood commences at the Bitter Lakes, at first thinly scattered, but gradually becoming more abundant, until it sometimes forms some impediment to the feet of the travellers and camels.

This region, sterile as it is, bears spontaneously all that it is capable of growing ; and after a few days of rain, the desert is soon covered with verdure, almost with pasture. If the soil were deprived of its salt, and irrigated with fresh-water, the whole Isthmus would be as fertile as the valley of the Nile. That valley was in ancient times also covered by the sea, and the desert which shuts it in right and left is as salt as this ; but all those parts which are watered by the river immediately acquire a prodigious fertility. It is therefore no dream to anticipate the approach of

the time when the best parts of the Isthmus will be brought under cultivation.

In traversing these vast plains, where the eye loses itself in boundless expanse, we witnessed the various illusions caused by the aspect of the desert to those unaccustomed to it. We repeatedly saw the mirage, and, but for our guides, might have been frequently deceived by it: once, indeed, the illusion was so complete, that, although aware of its nature, we could not believe the truth. On the morning of December 23rd, an hour after we broke up our camp at El-Ambak, at the foot of Mount Chebrewet (a small hill) we saw, as distinctly as possible, the appearance of a large and tranquil lake; we could almost imagine it the future canal, which in fact will pass not far from this spot. The mirage and the morning mists combined to produce this magical picture.

At other times we saw on the horizon whole forests, well-built towns, gigantic walls, and huge mountains. On approaching them, all this phantasmagoria dissolved; the forest became a tamarisk-bush three feet high, and the mountain dwindled to a hillock.

This phenomenon is the effect of the extreme transparency of the atmosphere, in a country where it scarcely ever rains, where the soil is almost as dry as the air, and clouds are as rare as showers. The sight, under these circumstances, becomes excellent

when it is accustomed to them. The Bedouins are celebrated for their astonishing long-sightedness, and they never suffer, like the Fellahs, from ophthalmia. It is therefore not the reflection of the sun's rays upon the sand that causes this distressing malady, as is commonly supposed; it is attributable to other causes, the investigation of which I leave to men of science.

The nights were as beautiful as the days; and never had we seen the moon (which was at the full) and the stars so brilliant, except in Upper Egypt. We could scarcely cease contemplating the magnificent spectacle, unknown in our climate, which has however its own advantages. In spite of all our occupations we were in continual rapture at the sight.

The only striking peculiarity of the desert we missed was its silence: our party was too numerous not to keep up an incessant noise; this noise however was inaudible at a little distance; and I sometimes wandered away from our camp, both by day and night, to enjoy the unbroken silence of these solitudes. At these moments, though conscious of my own perfect security, I could fully understand the terror which the Desert must strike into the heart of one who confronts it, alone and helpless.

As we approached Lake Timsah, what was our delight and surprise to hear the chirping of birds! We

had seen none for four or five days. In the neighbourhood of Suez, birds are occasionally met with, attracted by the vicinity of the sea; but animal life soon disappears, and the only traces visible on the sand are the delicate footprints of the gazelles, which come to browse on the buds of the tamarisks before sunrise, and the deep and heavy tracks of the hyænas. One of these animals followed our camp for three or four days successively, prowling all round it during the night. A caravan like ours is a great windfall in these parts, and the beast sought to profit by the chance. One of our Bedouins discovered it by the scent, upon which some of our party immediately started, in the bright moonlight, in chase of it. They fired at too great a distance, and missed their aim, but consoled themselves with the assurance that they had wounded the animal in the foot. We saw no more of it, although, by way of a bait, we offered it the body of one of our camels which had died on the fifth day of our journey.

On the 23rd day of December we encamped at a spot called Sheik-Ennedek, which is marked by a small stone-building raised over the grave of a San-ton, which the Arabs of the vicinity keep in repair, and where they are in the habit of depositing votive offerings. They often frequent these parts; and the next day, after visiting Bir Abou-Ballah (the Well of

the Father of Dates), and proceeding toward Lake Timsah, we had the pleasure of meeting an Arab with his flock of black sheep. He was a young man, of about twenty, extremely handsome and strikingly elegant, with a noble and intelligent air: and but for the gun slung over his shoulder, might have been the son of a patriarch of the Bible. At a short distance we discovered, in a hollow, the tent in which the rest of the family were preparing their meal. It was an admirable subject for a picture, but we had no artist in our party.

The view of Lake Timsah, still half-filled with the water which the Nile left there in its rising last year, is superb when seen from the downs, sixty feet high, which surround it. It is a natural port; and, when the great line of navigation passes by the canal, these vast cliffs will afford great facilities for the erection of all the buildings that may be required. The shores of the lake are covered with thickets of tamarisk-bushes. We observed great numbers of wild-ducks, at which our lads fired, but they did not succeed in giving us a single bird for dinner.

On quitting Lake Timsah, we traversed the Wady Toumilat for four leagues, as far as the ruins of Rameses, where we encamped to rest on Christmas Day. The site of this place, the Rameses of the Bible, the Heroopolis of the Greeks, and the present Tel-el-Mas-

route, is indicated by immense quantities of broken pottery, fragments of granite, porphyry, syenite, sandstone, and limestone, which must have been transported hither from a great distance.

The only monument found here is an Egyptian bas-relief, four or five feet high, sunk in the sand and concealed by the brushwood. It represents Rameses II. in a sitting posture, with his two sons, one on his right and the other on his left. On the back of the bas-relief is a hieroglyphical inscription. Our geologists told us that the coarse granite of which it is formed must have come from the quarries of Sinai: it was doubtless transported by sea and the canal, evident traces of which are found near Tel-el-Masrouta, and perfectly analogous to those we had seen at Chalonfct-Tarraba. It is by the valley (Wady) of Toumilat that the waters of the Nile penetrate during the high risings to the centre of the Isthmus. This year they have not reached Rameses; but their recent presence was attested by the appearance of all the brushwood around, which they had washed, and still more by the cracked mud of the Nile, perfectly similar to that on which our horses stumbled on the plain of Thebes, two hundred and fifty leagues distant.

On December 26th we rejoined the brigade of Egyptian engineers at El-Guisr, the highest point in the Isthmus, and saw them making a boring, which

had already reached the depth of fifty feet. On the 27th, at three o'clock, and after a hard journey, we encamped at Tel-el-Herr, the Magdolum of the itinerary of Antoninus. This was our sixth encampment.

On the height of Magdolum, which scarcely exceeds thirty feet, was formerly a fortress which commanded Lake Menzaleh and the road to Syria, which we had crossed on our way to this spot. The ruins here are considerable, although mostly crumbling away: there are fragments of pottery, bricks, and glass. After a few minutes' search, we found several coins, as we had before at Rameses, and I have no doubt that diggings would be attended with very fruitful results. The view from the top of the hill was beautiful; the sun was sinking in full and unclouded majesty below the horizon on the plains of Lower Egypt. On our left was the Fort of Tineh, on the right Cape El-Gerreh in the distance, and Cape Casius, and between the two, Pelusium with the Mediterranean. We had reached the limit of our journey. Little more remains than for me to speak of Pelusium and its anchorage.

## LETTER XIV.

## THE CAMEL.

Desert between Suez and Pelusium, Dec. 29th, 1855.

I SHALL reserve the roadstead of Pelusium for my concluding Letter. This shall be devoted to that wonderful animal which has rendered us such great service on our journey, and to which, in simple gratitude, we owe the tribute of a passing notice.

For eleven days we employed dromedaries in crossing the desert between Suez and Pelusium and making some excursions which the scientific survey of the Isthmus required. Although this is a short experiment, it has sufficed to make me appreciate this strange mode of conveyance, of which no one can form any idea without personal experience.

When we started, and each of us had to choose between a dromedary and an ass, I preferred, without hesitation, the former, as the peculiar *monture* of the



country ; nor had I any reason to repent my choice. We had no horses ; they drink too much and are soon fatigued by the sand. The ass, though not so abstemious as the camel, can bear fatigue better than the horse ; but he has short legs for these immense tracts, and cannot get along fast enough by the side of his huge companions ; and, notwithstanding his patience, he cannot perform long journeys, or carry heavy burdens. But I do not mean to disparage the merits of an animal which has rendered us great service, and which on this occasion was preferred by most of our friends.

It may be observed, that the distinction made on the authority of Buffon, is not recognized in Egypt. The camel and dromedary are constantly confounded ; and, if a distinction is made, it is not in consequence of the number of humps, but merely because one carries the baggage and the other the traveller. In Egypt, and probably also in Arabia, these animals are all called indiscriminately Camels.

The reader will bear in mind that, in speaking of the Camel, I always allude to the animal with one hump,—sometimes laden with baggage, and at others mounted by the traveller. The animal with two humps, to which Buffon restricts the name Camel, is not found in this climate. It would be regarded as a curiosity, and, being a native of a colder climate,

would probably not live here. That is the Bactrian camel, so called by Aristotle, whom I shall often quote, as his observations are perfectly accurate although concise. The other animal he calls the Arabian camel, and this is the only one I have seen. The dromedary, then, is, as its name denotes, the *runner*,—the camel which carries man long journeys, rapidly and without fatigue; the camel, properly so called, is the beast of burden.

Having premised these remarks, I return to my personal impressions on the journey, which I give simply as they arose.

The appearance of the camel is not attractive, nor does this unfavourable impression wear off by use. The feeling is not one of novelty or surprise :

“Le premier qui vit un chameau  
S'enfuit à cet objet nouveau,”

says La Fontaine; and he adds,—

“Le second approcha; le troisième osa faire  
Un licou pour le dromadaire.”

The long, almost bare neck, the small, flattened, narrow and awkwardly balanced head, the hump upon his back, the prominent system of bones, the large and vigorous joints, covered with callosities, the large and almost round feet, the slow motion, the stupid solemnity of look, the ill-formed belly, the continual movement of the lips, which hang down, from there

being no front teeth in the upper jaw (as Aristotle remarks), the strange postures when he stops, and stands with his legs apart, the miserable tail, bare except at the extremity, like that of a donkey,—all conspire to give the camel a disagreeable and almost ludicrous appearance.

I admit that the camel is a deformed animal. Like the elephant, the giraffe, and some others, he wants proportion in the various parts of his body: and, although they may combine to fulfil one purpose (which they fulfil admirably), yet, taken apart, there is something revolting about them. There is scarcely any animal more perfectly fitted for its work than the camel, but scarcely any one more ugly. The only redeeming feature is its eye, which has a certain softness; but even the eyes habitually want expression. In short, the camel might be thought to be one of those imperfect creatures which inhabited other worlds than ours, and belonged to different systems. Some species which escaped the general destruction still mingle incongruously with the more recent species; a living testimony on our globe of a state of things which the revolutions of ages have overturned.

Another peculiarity of the camel is, that he is an incessant grumbler, whatever his master may do; though not devoid of attachment or gratitude, he incessantly complains. Whether he be made to kneel

down or to rise up, whether to be loaded or unloaded, he groans, and casts mournful looks on all around. When burdens are laid upon his back he redoubles his groans, which acquire a sort of intelligence and meaning,—like reproaches and complaints to his driver, whom he doubtless regards as his tormentor; he seems trying to soften his heart, by representing to him the enormity of the weight with which he is laden. I can readily believe what Buffon says of the obstinate refusal of the camel to carry an excessive load, or to rise until it is lightened. I observed one under my window at Cairo, which appeared to be acting this little scene with his master: but I must add, that the humane driver did not need much entreaty; he took off a third of the load, and the animal, showing a reciprocal condescension, rose without much trouble or many groans.

The camel is loaded in the following manner. It is first made to kneel, and squat down with its belly on the ground, the hind legs being drawn under it. On its back it carries a pack-saddle, usually of a triangular form, ill made, but solid, and furnished with girths, which are well tightened. At each end of the pack-saddle, behind and before, are pummels, to which are attached the netting intended to contain the load. These nets are made of coarse aloe or palm cords, and are strong enough to carry considerable weights.

When the camel is on the ground the net is unfolded and spread out carefully : the load is placed in it, and it is then raised, the ends of the net being handed over to a second loader, who has performed the same operation on his side. He lifts his load at the same time as his comrade, and the cords of the two parts being tied together, the weight is adjusted and balanced, after being first pretty equally divided in the nets : if either side is too heavy, the equilibrium is restored by raising the heavier load a little higher on the animal's side.

The camel-drivers display considerable skill and strength in this manœuvre, which is performed in less time than it takes me to describe it. It is not an unimportant point, for an ill-adjusted load adds greatly to the fatigue of the beast, chafes him, and causes delay on the road to remedy the mischief. On the contrary, when the burden is well arranged, the camel can walk with greater ease and lightness, if not more quickly, and he is secured from being galled by a cloth or covering of some kind, generally placed under the pack-saddle.

When once laden, the camel, though his joints are so bent as to appear almost dislocated, rises with a surprising degree of strength and vigour. The weight upon his back does not seem to incommode him at all, though it is usually at least from 400 to

450 pounds, and his strong muscular houghs recover their position without the slightest staggering or pain.

Buffon exaggerates, I think, in saying that large camels can carry from a thousand to twelve hundred pounds, and that small ones carry from six to seven hundred. The accounts I have received scarcely reach one-half of this statement; and, as I have said, four camels are reckoned for the transport of a ton: this gives an average of 560 pounds each. The loads of course vary very much, but I do not think any I have seen would nearly reach the maximum given by Buffon. Camels of the largest kind have frequently passed us; the loads fastened to their sides were considerable, but I doubt whether the heaviest equalled even the minimum I have just quoted. Buffon never travelled in the East, and consequently could not verify by actual observation the statements he received. He was besides a great admirer of the camel, and this predilection, which I share, may perhaps have led him to attribute to the animal more strength than it really possesses. Those who have had a long acquaintance with the camel in journeys across the desert (for example, Mr. Wellsted of the Indian Navy), know its value, and are loud in its praise.\*

The camel thus loaded is ready to start on his journey: now it is that the useful qualities with which

\* Travels in Arabia, vol. i. p. 300.

nature has gifted him are displayed in all their force, I may almost say in all their grandeur. He is so docile that it is scarcely necessary to drive him ; and connected by a rope with his comrade that precedes him, at a little distance, he follows his leader quietly and steadily, without ever turning, without quickening or slackening his pace, without a moment of caprice or of laziness. These files of camels sometimes number thirty, or even fifty ; and one man, or even a child, at their head, suffices to lead the troop.

Docility is however the least merit of the camel, although, combined with his wonderful strength, it is certainly a great recommendation. The creature possesses another advantage, far more valuable, which gives it its superiority over all other animals : this is the well-known power of going without drink for very long periods of time. Buffon says, that in the predatory excursions of the Bedouins, the camels upon which they are mounted go eight or nine days without drinking, travelling forty or fifty leagues a day. This statement is perfectly correct ; our camels, which we should not have allowed to suffer from thirst, went ten days without drinking, without any inconvenience. They started from Cairo on the 16th of December, loaded with all our baggage, and especially with the water for our use, which they were not to taste. On the fourth day they reached Suez, where there is no

drinkable water, any more than in the surrounding desert; and it was not until the 25th, when we approached the waters of the Nile, in the Wady Toumi-lat, that we sent them a distance of some leagues, to satisfy their thirst, past and to come.

A French soldier, who had been long in the service of the Bey of Tunis, told me that, in one terrible expedition, his camels did not drink for twenty-five successive days. Many men of the troop he commanded died of thirst, notwithstanding all the precautions taken. The camels grew thin, but not one fell ill. I cannot positively vouch for the truth of this fact; but I have full confidence in the veracity of my informant, and can quite believe it, after all that I have myself observed. Lieutenant Wellsted,\* whose veracity is unquestionable, mentions camels which have remained twenty-five days without drinking, and have not suffered much.

This power of endurance, invaluable in the deserts which the caravans have to traverse, appears to be due to the particular organization which the camel alone of all ruminating animals possesses. This peculiarity, which is mentioned by Aristotle, has been so often described that it is needless for me to enlarge upon it. The stock of water which the camel keeps in the extraordinary stomach or pouch with which he

\* Travels in Arabia, vol. i. p. 298.



is furnished does not mix with the other liquids of the body, nor with the juices of the digestive process. A simple muscular contraction is sufficient to cause it to re-ascend to the œsophagus, and enable the animal to quench his thirst.

Often, in passing our camels, when they were silently reposing and ruminating, we heard a singular noise in their throat and, as it seemed, in the depths of the abdomen, which surprised us. One of our companions amused himself with imitating the sound of this internal fountain, at which the poor beasts watered, without stirring from their place or causing us the least trouble.

The moderation of the camel is not confined to drink; the solid nourishment he takes is inconsiderable, and he is satisfied with a small ball of dough, as his food for a whole day. Usually he dispenses even with this, browsing on the dry or green brushwood he meets with on his journey, which he crops as he goes. In the evening a handful of beans are laid for him upon a cloth, and he grinds them in silence with his strong jaws. I have frequently seen three or four camels lying around an *abaïeh*, or Bedouin cloak, on which their slender pittance had been spread. They lay flat on the ground, with their heads resting on this extemporized table. Each in turn took a mouthful from his own little heap of beans, without mixing

them, and above all without disputing among themselves. This poor nourishment, partaken in company, appeared to please them greatly, and the evening meal was eaten with an appetite which might raise our envy. It seems that all camels are not so peaceable; Mr. Wellsted found those of Yemen very quarrelsome, and says they frequently fought.\*

Another good quality of the camel is his sure-footedness. He has a very broad foot, which he plants upon the sand with a steadiness not possessed by even the best horses. The foot, which is cloven like that of all ruminating animals, has a peculiar formation, which has attracted the attention of anatomists: it is fleshy and somewhat tender. Aristotle says that in long marches care was taken to cover it with a sort of sock; he also remarks that the camel is the only animal, except man, which has its feet covered with flesh. Our camels never appeared to suffer in any degree from their journeys, which, it is true, were short.

This breadth and solidity of the foot, which is almost round, give the rider an astonishing security, increased by the amble which is almost the natural pace of the dromedary: there is never a false step, never the least hesitation. His pace is not so slow as it appears: the great length of his legs makes the

\* Travels in Arabia, vol. i. p. 289.

step very long, and he travels at least a league an hour without effort. At a trot, he easily goes three or four, and can continue this pace for twenty-four hours successively. Aristotle asserts that some dromedaries surpass the swiftest race-horses, even those of Nissa; and he gives for this the reason I have just stated—the length of the step. This assertion may be true of some picked dromedaries; but it must refer exclusively to the trot. Our camels would, I think, have found great difficulty in breaking into a gallop, and I never observed in them any inclination to adopt that terrible, fearful pace.

On horseback a gallop is usually easier and more gentle than a trot, because the movements in the saddle are longer. Upon the camel the gallop is perfectly intolerable; no rider, however strong and agile, could keep his seat in the saddle; fall he must, with more or less danger and bruises. To check these perilous fits of excitement, which only occur at certain periods, a thread is passed through the camel's nostril by means of a needle; and this curb-rein, slight as it is, effectually masters him, or rather reduces him to his habitual gentleness. A Bedouin hardly ever mounts a dromedary without having a needle and thread in his pocket; and if he is thrown, he performs this little operation on his beast as soon as he catches him again.

The camel is able to perform incredible journeys without ever going out of a trot. Mehemet Ali, on his return from an excursion into Arabia, learned at Suez that a revolt was imminent at Cairo : he instantly set off, and he travelled the thirty-two leagues in nine hours, without stopping. A circumstance perhaps still more astonishing is, that his faithful Saïs, at the risk of his life, performed the whole distance at the same pace, clinging all the while to the cords and streamers which usually hang from richly-ornamented saddles. This fact is well known in Egypt. The Saïs many years survived this frightful and scarcely credible journey.

Lieutenant Wellsted witnessed a camel-race, the camels being matched against each other like our race-horses. It was in the tribe of Geneba, one of the most important of the Hedjaz.\* Notwithstanding all his respect for the camel, he could not much admire the creature under this novel aspect. The idea of camels running for a prize, little accorded with the natural gravity of the beast ; he is not formed to waste his strength and time, and has nothing of the lightness and elegance required for such feats. At a trot, the experiment might have been possible, but at a gallop it seems to have succeeded very ill. The camels, after a short run, became wild and uncontrollable ; and if

\* Travels in Arabia, vol. i. p. 71.

this extraordinary excitement had not been speedily stopped, more than one accident would have happened. Far from believing, with Aristotle, that the camel can compete in speed with the horse, Lieutenant Wellsted thinks the gallop of the former is at most a third as swift as that of a vigorous horse. This estimate is probably correct ; and it is clear to me that the camel would be distanced in a few instants, though his strength so greatly exceeds that of the most powerful racehorse. Camels are formed to support long journeys, which would very soon kill the best horse ; they are not calculated for those frantic flights of a few minutes in which the heroes of Ascot and Epsom win their laurels. The camels of Oman, which are the strongest and gentlest, can trot thirty-six hours consecutively, and travel a hundred and twenty leagues without stopping ; but they would be quite incapable of running a league in five minutes, as horses have done upon the turf.

It is well known that the camel is the only means of transport and locomotion in the burning climates in which he lives, the only animal that can support such fatigue and privation. Without him, man would be unable to cross the desert, and a great portion of the world would remain impassable to him. Without him nearly the whole of Africa, and one quarter of Asia, might perhaps have remained unin-

habited. The people of these countries have a great attachment and value for their poor beasts of burden, and take all possible care of them ; when obliged to abandon them in the desert, their grief is deep and sincere, and seems to be shared by the miserable animals, as if they foresaw the frightful death awaiting them, the torture of being devoured alive by the birds of prey circling overhead.

But I have as yet only alluded to the camel, which carries the baggage, tents, and provisions ; it was of the dromedary I chiefly wished to speak. Strong beasts are required for the transport of baggage or merchandise ; but others of a swifter kind are wanted for riding.

On looking up for the first time at the height on which you are to be perched, the feeling is somewhat appalling. I have seen dromedaries, whose back, including the saddle, was hardly less than ten feet high. To be mounted up at such a distance from the ground, in a posture to which you are unaccustomed, and on an unsteady seat, is certainly not very promising, and several of my companions resisted the temptation to mount this elevated perch during the whole journey. As soon however as you are fairly seated, you feel completely at your ease.

Even that balancing of the body, which must follow the oscillating movements of the camel, is acquired not only without trouble, but with a kind of pleasure.

This rocking motion causes nothing like a feeling of sea-sickness, as is commonly asserted: the idea is a mere prejudice, and one has only to look at the necessary position of the body of a person mounted on a dromedary to be convinced of the truth of this. The real difficulty is to mount; although lessened by practice, this is never quite overcome, even with the most docile animals. The animal is first made to kneel down; his halter is pulled to make him lower his head, and this movement is accompanied with a peculiar guttural sound, which the beast knows perfectly well. When the dromedary has lain down, his back is still very high, and to get astride on it and leap into the saddle requires an agility not possessed by every one; a stirrup is therefore attached to the pommel in front of the saddle, in which the left foot is placed, whilst the right is thrown over the back.

Here begins the danger, if so it can be called: as soon as the camel feels his rider's foot in the stirrup, he instantly attempts to rise; and the better the animal, the more abrupt and rapid is this movement. The rider would be in a perilous situation, if the camel were to rise suddenly, while his left foot was still in the stirrup, and before he had time to lay hold of the pommels. To prevent any such difficulty whilst the rider mounts, the halter is usually held down, to prevent the animal's raising his head; while

the man at the same time places one foot upon his leg, to prevent his straightening it too soon. When unassisted, the rider must either leap nimbly into the saddle before the camel rises, or place his left hand upon its neck, pressing it forcibly down.

When seated in the saddle, there is another trial to go through. The dromedary has to rise; and as he raises his hind-legs first, one after another—(the only animal which rises thus)—he throws his rider by this movement forward quite over the saddle; then raising his fore-legs in turn, the rider is jerked with equal violence backwards. After this alternate pitching and tossing, you are tranquilly seated in the saddle, and have only to enjoy the gentleness, firmness, and strength of your beast. I must add, that in mounting, whether assisted or not, you are never quite helpless; the pommels of the saddle, before and behind, are very large, and you can catch a sufficiently strong hold of them to assist you greatly in mounting, or in keeping your seat.

Once in the saddle, the rider can vary his position at pleasure. The usual one is nearly that of a lady on horseback; the right leg is brought over the pommel in front, which supports it, and the foot rests firmly on the animal's neck; the left foot is in the stirrup, and the body slightly turned to the left side. This position may however be reversed by putting the stirrup on the



other side. Another change may be made, by letting the legs hang down on either side, as on horseback ; or lastly, they may be crossed round the pommel in front, resting upon the neck of the camel.

It is much easier to guide the animal than to mount him : a small hooked stick usually serves the rider to pick up the halter, without the trouble of stooping, if it drop from his hand. When the animal should go to the left, he is touched upon the right side of his neck with the stick, and *vice versâ*. To quicken his pace, you strike him with the heel that rests in the stirrup and lies nearly upon his shoulder ; when touched in this place he begins to trot, or at least to mend his pace. To stop him, the halter is pulled back somewhat forcibly, and the animal stops soon, though not abruptly.

To mount the camel, however, and to keep your seat on his back, is not all that is required ; it is necessary to learn to dismount, and here there is another process to be acquired. The rider undergoes the same pitching and tossing as when he mounted, only the movements are contrary. The camel is first warned by a touch upon his shoulder, and by that peculiar noise in the throat, which I have mentioned. Upon this, he stops, and, after a few groans, not proceeding from stubbornness, but only as a matter of course, he makes up his mind to bend one fore-leg, and incline one

knee. After a little insisting on your part, he bends the other fore-leg ; and as he is now much lower before than behind, you are thrown forward in the saddle, seemingly in danger of being flung off but for the aid of the pommel. The animal then bends his hind legs, one after the other, and you are jerked with the same violence backward. He rests his belly on the ground, and after one or two slight heavings he is firmly planted, and you may dismount, with or without the help of the stirrup.

There is another and more expeditious way of mounting and dismounting, in which the dromedary is not made to kneel down ; but I advise no one to attempt this who is not sure of his strength and agility. The right leg is passed over the animal's neck, to bring it close to the left, which is taken out of the stirrup ; the rider is thus seated with his legs hanging on the left side : he lays hold of the front pommel with his right hand, and slides gently down ; then lets go of the pommel, and jumps from a height of two or three feet to the ground. This is the simplest and quickest way of dismounting, but not the safest.

Upon the whole, I maintain that the camel is an excellent beast for riding, notwithstanding the slight inconveniences I have mentioned. You are perfectly at ease on his back, and I think it is hardly an exaggeration to say, that you might eat, sleep, and even

write there without much difficulty. In the enormous saddle-bags suspended on either side under the rider's legs, all the requisites for the journey can be stowed. As I never felt the least fatigue from travelling in this manner, during our excursions, I presume I could travel for a long time so without experiencing any inconvenience.

If a traveller by chance falls ill, two camels carry a palanquin, in which the invalid lies upon a good bed. The poles are supported by girths passed over the backs of the animals. The hind camel has his head bent down in a very uneasy position under the palanquin which he helps to carry. But his patience and strength are unexhausted in these laborious efforts; and the pace is so gentle and regular, that the invalid may travel all day long without perceiving that the poor animal is bent beneath a frightful burden, which cramps and impedes his movements.

In the streets of Cairo, and on the banks of the Nile, I have frequently seen camels carrying as many as four women at once; a kind of temporary house was erected, in which these ladies rode perfectly at their ease, sheltered from the sun and dust. These were harems, removing; M. Horace Vernet's picture of the "*Prise de la Smalah*," may serve to give an idea of what can be done in this way: an entire family can travel on the back of one camel.

The ridicule which some European travellers have heaped upon the poor camel seems to me very unjust. One English author indulges in a regular diatribe against him: "He is the most ill-favoured beast possible; he is insupportable and impatient beyond measure, always grumbling. The camel has a malignant look; you would think him a damned animal; and painters, in their scenes of demons and witches' revels, ought to place him in hell, where he would make an excellent figure." Lastly, this writer, whilst acknowledging that the camel, which scarcely ever drinks, is useful in a country where there is no water, asserts that no gentleman would exchange his horse for this hideous beast of burden. I pass over many other witticisms, which doubtless appeared very clever to their author, but which to any person of good sense are pitiable: I am quite satisfied that every gentleman, with the slightest regard to self-preservation, would esteem himself too happy to leave his horse on the borders of the desert, and find a strong and steady camel to carry him across it. The author I have quoted, has only to ask her fellow-countryman, Lieutenant Wellsted, who has precisely the same opinion of the camel as myself, for a confirmation of what I say.

I utterly dissent from this picture drawn by a distorted imagination, and agree with Buffon, who, after a long study of all the qualities and character of the

camel, pronounces it to be "the most useful and valuable of all the creatures subject to man;" he calls it the true treasure of the East; and concludes by declaring that the camel is not only more valuable than the elephant, but perhaps equal in value to the horse, the ass, and the ox united. It does not require a long residence in those countries which the camel inhabits, to feel the truth and the justness of this eulogy.

I pity those wrong-minded persons who, for a momentary amusement, and to display their satirical talent in the eyes of fools, can take pleasure in depreciating the beauties and harmonies of creation. In my mind it is sufficient to remark the adaptation of the camel's temperance to the dry climate in which it has to live, and of the form of its foot to the soil it treads, to feel the profound and admirable relation between them. Man may have modified the nature of this wonderful animal, by subjecting it to his service; man may have so completely domesticated the camel, that it is never found in a wild state; but God, who created it, formed it for the desert; and I willingly leave to acuter minds than mine the task of denying a truth so obvious and so consolatory.

## LETTER XV.

## THE BAY OF PELUSIUM.

Alexandria, January 2nd, 1856.

ON the 28th of December our camp was astir earlier than usual, and we set out on our journey an hour before sunrise, which at this season is about seven o'clock. We were impatient to reach the end of our travels, and hurried on, as the motion of a falling body is accelerated as it approaches the earth to which it tends.

At nine o'clock our dromedaries, which seemed equally to long for repose, ascended the last of the low downs which lay before us. From their summit, which was not above thirty feet high, we saw at our feet a wide and black-looking plain, bordered by a line of sand, at a distance of about a league. This belt separated it from the Mediterranean; the plain was that of Pelusium. Knowing how unsafe it is reputed to be, we descended to it with some hesitation. Three

of our party, M. Ferdinand de Lesseps, his son, and myself, were bold enough to make the experiment, at the risk, as was believed, of sinking with our beasts in the mud. The rest of the caravan remained on the downs, anxiously watching our attempt, which appeared perilous, but, if successful, would shorten our route some leagues.

All doubt was soon ended; and, when our companions saw us advancing securely over this supposed marsh, they all followed our example, and in less than half an hour we reached the ruins of the ancient Pelusium. The blackish soil we traversed was the mud of the Nile, which we knew well from having seen it so long in the valley of Egypt, and again in the Wady Toumilat. The rise of the waters had been this year less than usual, and had dried up quickly; and at the end of December we crossed these seas of mud dry-footed, and without our camels sinking into it at all.

The ruins of Pelusium are still very extensive. They commence, on the side we approached them, with a ruined fort, of Roman construction, and of course placed upon an eminence. At a short distance I saw the remains of a wide and solid brick wall, like that of a fortress; and on the ground appeared the well-defined vestiges of a large square enclosure. This was doubtless the site of the citadel.

Proceeding westward, we found six or seven columns

lying on the ground, and forming a pretty regular parallelogram. These are of a reddish granite, brought apparently from the quarries of Selseleh : I discovered no trace of hieroglyphics upon them. It would be difficult to ascertain what may have been their former dimensions, but the fragments are now not more than twenty feet long ; and, from their small diameter, I should conjecture that they belonged rather to a Grecian temple, than to an Egyptian edifice. They are ranged upon the ground with a symmetry which may be the effect of chance, or of the movement of the waters by which they are usually bathed ; but it is also possible that the hand of man may have had some share in it ; and, although the Bedouins are careless of these remains, which we regard with such religious veneration, they may perhaps have taken the pains to put them in some kind of order and arrangement.

Upon a hillock, a quarter of a league distant, and somewhat higher than the surrounding ones, we made numerous small discoveries, in the course of a few minutes, which disclosed to us the site of extensive habitations. There were innumerable fragments of broken bricks and pottery, glass-wares of all colours, fragments of vases which must have been very elegant ; some of them still showed traces of the gilding which once ornamented them.



In a short time we discovered, scattered upon the ground, the remains of an entire mosaic,—small square stones of various colours, cut according to one pattern, and which had evidently once formed one of those admirable pictures which the mosaics of the Greek and Roman times presented. All the outlines of this were effaced, and the fragments were so scattered that it was impossible to trace any design. The soil in this part of the country is light and spongy, like that of peat-moss; it is visited almost yearly by the waters of the river, and frequently by rains, and is not firm enough for works of such delicacy to exist in it for any length of time. The mosaic we found was scattered about, but the small cubes, which we amused ourselves with picking up, might be easily formed into new mosaics.

All around this mosaic we found numerous bronze medals, but so oxidized that it is impossible to decipher anything upon them. A gold coin which an Arab gave to one of our party was in perfect preservation, and of the time of Constantine. As Pelusium was not only an Egyptian, Greek, and Roman town, but was also under the Arab rule, we discovered there antiquities of quite another kind: I brought away a piece of glass, with an inscription, apparently in Arabic letters, but they are too few to make any sense out of them. I showed this piece,

which seemed to me curious, to the learned Dr. Per-ron, who told me that inscriptions of this kind are not rare.

On quitting this part of the ruins of Pelusium, we went to breakfast under the shelter of the ruined fort, and in the shade of some tamarisks with red fruit; thence to encamp on a more convenient spot, at a league and a half distance, on the margin of a small lagoon, which is laid down in the maps at scarcely a hundred yards from the sea. On our way to this spot, I examined two large granite columns on the plain, lying on the ground, like the others, and nearly a league distant from them. Were these also remains of Pelusium? The hypothesis seems to me highly probable, and a temple or palace doubtless stood upon this spot.

Pelusium is a very ancient town: Ezekiel mentions it six hundred years before the Christian era, according to the Vulgate.\* The prophet with his accustomed vehemence pronounces a curse upon this town, which he calls "the strength of Egypt," and places it in the same rank with Memphis, and with the city which was subsequently Alexandria. Pelusium, situated not far from the frontier of Syria, has always been regarded as the key of Egypt on that side, and it cannot have been abandoned by the Arabs until a late

\* Ezekiel xxx. 15, 16.

period ; they contented themselves with erecting in the vicinity the small fort of Tineh, which has the advantage of being nearer to the sea.

When the unfortunate Pompey came to seek a refuge upon this coast, and to meet there his death, Ptolemy, then at war with his sister Cleopatra, was at Pelusium with his whole army, according to the account given by Plutarch ; the city must at that period have still been very considerable, or rather had as yet lost nothing of its splendour. At the present day, reduced to the remains which I have just described, it would be impossible for an army to encamp or live there ; it would moreover have the greatest difficulty in reaching the spot, being obliged to take the route which we followed across the desert, or to cross Lake Menzaleh, or to go by sea,—three ways equally difficult for a numerous army. We may suppose that Lake Menzaleh was at that time more navigable than at the present day ; and perhaps embankments constructed upon its shores, and in its highest parts, would allow of a more easy circulation upon it. Leaving however these hypotheses, I return to our researches.

On reaching the roadstead of Pelusium, we observed to the right of the seashore a sort of cape, which stood out perpendicularly or even appeared overhanging. At the distance it looked to us like a

rock; and this discovery, upon a completely sandy coast, was so important, that we were anxious to verify it immediately; since, if we thus found ready at hand the materials necessary for the construction of the future port of Pelusium, it would be an immense advantage.

Geological science, it is true, scarcely justified these hopes, as M. de Negrelli remarked to me four or five days before; but nature presents many anomalies, and the appearances we saw before us made us reckon a little upon chance.

Early on the morning of the 29th we started on foot, proceeding along the edge of the water, where the sand was as firm as asphaltum. We had thus an opportunity of ascertaining the true nature of this coast, of which we had heard such strange descriptions. A porpoise, which was sporting in the sea within fifty yards of the shore, accompanied us for at least half a league.

After a walk of two hours and a half, we at length reached the supposed rock, the dimensions and form of which changed greatly as we approached it; and we soon perceived that geology was not at fault. Instead of a promontory and rock we found only a ruined fort, which had been erected by the Romans on the top of a small down, projecting further toward the sea than the rest. The sun-dried bricks of which

it was built, the arches they described, and all the architectural details, did not leave the slightest doubt. Neither the Egyptians, nor the Arabs, ever executed such a work. In a short time we discovered proofs which would have settled any doubts we might have felt before. In the wall we found the foot of a bronze candelabrum, weighing at least seven pounds, which I brought away. M. de Negrelli found a piece of charming sculpture of white marble, which may perhaps have formed the brim of a beautiful vase. A small column of less pure grey marble lay upon the ground, where it had been left by some visitors who preceded us, bearing an inscription with the date of 1849. My companions also picked up, in a few minutes, about thirty medals, all oxidized, but easily cleaned with acids.

The spot on which we now were is in modern maps named El-Gerreh, which seems to correspond to a name mentioned by Strabo, on this coast. From the highest point, the ascent of which is easy, the view extended over the sea, which in rough weather washes against this little hill, and gradually undermines the solid walls of the old fort. To our right, in the distance, was Cape Casius, which we had at first erroneously supposed to be at El-Gerreh; then, at a short distance from the sea, an immense lagoon, which the neighbouring Arabs call Sabbacah-el-Ber-

daouin. This is the spot, if we may credit tradition, where one of the Baldwins, King of Jerusalem, was drowned, with his army, which he had imprudently led into these unknown parts. This lagoon is formed by the sea-water, which, driven by violent winds, washes over the bank of sand separating it from the sea. The water is left in the immense basin, but is renewed often enough to prevent its becoming putrid.

This part of the country is also rendered famous by another and more celebrated event, the death of Pompey, 48 B.C. Judging from Plutarch's account, and especially from the localities themselves, I think it must have been at El-Gerreh that he landed, when he quitted his galley, and was received by the traitors who were to assassinate him. Achilles made him get into a boat, under pretext that there was a great quantity of mud at this spot, and that the sea was full of sandbanks. As there are no traces of sandbanks along the coast, this expression must be understood to refer to the tongues of land which separate the sea from the lagoons. Landing at El-Gerreh, Pompey was within about three leagues of Pelusium, and could in a short time reach the city in which was the king to whom he confided his fortunes. This is of course mere conjecture; but it is confirmed by the authority of Pliny, who places the scene of the event to the east

of Pelusium, and not, as has been affirmed on the authority of some Arab traditions, to the west.

We spent the rest of the day in tracking the barrier of sand westward, towards the Oum-Fareg Mouth ; in the morning we had followed it eastward as far as El-Gerreh. We had thus time carefully to examine the seashore ; and, as I bathed with some of my companions in the sea (which was as tepid here in December as with us in July), I can affirm that I know these parts well. I have seen nothing of those “ shifting mud-banks ” with which we had been threatened. The sand on the shore is perfectly pure, and of a remarkable quality : its grains are very hard, and, according to Pliny, it was used in the place of diamond-dust, to polish precious stones. The water is turbid all along this shore ; but the particles of earth it contains are so minute that a person bathing cannot perceive them : I say this from personal experience.

How has this strange reputation been given to Pelusium ? It seems to be confirmed by etymology, the name being derived from *Pelos*, signifying in Greek “ mud,” like *Tineh* in Arabic, and *Sug*, which I think occurs in the Bible, in Hebrew. The fact is this : when the waters of the Nile are high, and, through Lake Menzaleh, reach these districts, Pelusium, or all that remains of it, must be an immense deposit of half-liquid mud, probably very dangerous for pedestrians

and camels. The slough, however, formed in the blackish plain which I mentioned at the beginning of this Letter, has no connection with the sea, from which it is separated by the barrier of sand which isolates and contains it. If by any chance this mass of mud, of which the Arabs have a great dread, should be discharged into the sea, the earth or slime would be immediately dissolved by the mere action of the waves, as is the case with the prodigious mass of mud which the Nile constantly deposits there, and which, though it slightly sullies the transparency of the waters, does not load it in any degree, as many imagine, who speak in ignorance of what they have never seen. On the beach, and as far out as I could find a footing, there is no mud or slime, but a soft and firm bottom of sand.

The case is exactly the same at greater depths. On board the Egyptian frigate which cruised in these waters for a whole month, frequently changing its station to take soundings, care was taken to collect from the bill of the anchor, every time it was raised, the portions of earth which it brought up from the bottom. These specimens were preserved, and they all exhibit the same result,—a sandy clay, mixed with blackish particles which, at a distance, give it the appearance of peat-earth. These particles are the only deposit of the waters of the Nile; they had been held in suspen-



sion, and had fallen to the bottom of the sea. The movement of the waters has disintegrated and dissolved the slime and mud, leaving no trace of them but the opal tint of the waves, of a yellowish green. The idea that this mud could accumulate in the open sea, sufficiently to impede the navigation, caused us much amusement, as we walked upon the smooth clean beach, covered with beautiful shells.

I do not deny that, at a considerable distance from the shore—say, above a league—there are large accumulations of mud and ooze; our engineers have ascertained the fact, and have explained it in various ways: but it is equally certain that this mud, which comes from the Nile, does not approach the shore, but is irresistibly retained within a belt where the most timid navigators have nothing to fear from it. The final Report of the International Commission will, I feel assured, give the most satisfactory information on this point to science and to mariners; enlightening the former, and giving confidence to the latter, who have been very causelessly alarmed by vague or false traditional accounts.

On December 30th we made an excursion to the Fort of Tineh, an elegant Arabian structure, which is falling into ruin. From this spot we discerned the smoke of the steamer which was to receive and convey us to Alexandria. It was the 'Nile,' a fine Egyptian

frigate, which alone escaped the disaster of Sinope, thanks to the powerful paddles with which she is furnished, and the courage of her captain, Abdoul Achmet. She sent one of her boats to shore, and we were soon in communication with her.

At five o'clock in the afternoon, M. Larousse, engineer and hydrographer of the French navy, arrived at the camp, with the welcome tidings of the unhopedor results obtained in his soundings, which gave us all the greatest joy : this was a worthy termination of our Expedition.

At Suez, the other extremity of the Isthmus, he had found the depth of twenty-six feet required for the Sea Canal, at 2000 yards from the shore, instead of 4400. At Pelusium, and over an extent of four or five leagues, the same depth was found at 2500 yards from the shore, instead of 6000 or 7000 ; and what is perhaps still more important, there was a depth of sixteen feet at 820 yards from the shore. Thus the piers, both at Pelusium and at Suez, will not require to be one-half the length at first supposed.

On the morning of December 31st we embarked on board the Egyptian frigate. We proceeded to verify some soundings at the Ghemileh Mouth, where we took on board several of the men left on shore for the works. We hastened back to Alexandria, where, on the morning of the 1st of January, 1856, we brought

these grand tidings as a happy augury for the New Year.

Our travels were terminated, and the question relating to the Isthmus of Suez was scientifically solved. The fact should be distinctly and loudly proclaimed to all civilized nations, that there exists no natural obstacle to prevent the commerce of Asia with the rest of the world taking a shorter, easier, and safer route.

In concluding these Letters, I must express the satisfaction I shall feel if they have contributed to interest my readers in one of the noblest enterprises of the age.

BARTHÉLEMY SAINT-HILAIRE,

*Member of the Institute.*

## APPENDIX.

REFORMS IN THE ADMINISTRATION OF EGYPT.  
ORGANIZATION OF SOUDAN.\*

THE decree recently issued by the Viceroy for the reorganization of Soudan is so interesting, and of so important a character, that I give it here entire. This curious document, the general tone of which reminds us of the ancient ordinances of our kings, and the patriarchal traditions of the Bible, exhibits the lamentable state of these provinces previous to the visit of the Viceroy; the immense reforms which Mohammed Said has recently introduced; and the great resources opened to the Egyptian Government.

The reader will particularly remark what relates to the taxes and the assessment. The administration which has now been superseded, and which was attributable entirely to previous abuses, was odious,—equally absurd and barbarous. The taxes will hence-

\* *L'Isthme de Suez Journal*, March 25th, 1857.

forth be collected by the commune or village itself, organized nearly in the same form as in many European states. The action of the central Government will be felt as little as possible, and the public power will reside in the principal places of the provinces. The delegates of the villages will be chosen by the inhabitants themselves, and these delegates will receive, on the bases fixed by His Highness the Viceroy, the sums destined for the state treasury.

On the other hand, the inhabitants of the villages will no longer be compelled to reside in the place of their birth, but will be at liberty to remove at their pleasure, without being considered deserters, and treated as such. They will be free to settle where they please, and they will be taxed, without any increase in the rate, in the place which they may choose to settle in. Formerly, the village, which was responsible to the public treasury, was bound to make the resident inhabitants pay the portion due from the absent; and consequently the more the village was impoverished by expatriation, the more it had to pay. This was the climax of injustice, and the reader may judge what a salutary reform the following ordonnance opens to these unhappy people.

To this must be added the complete and definitive abolition of the slavery of the Blacks in the very land of its origin. The Viceroy has liberated all the slaves

that remained, and thanks to the measures which have recently been taken in Soudan, slavery will never again be able to arise under any form. This alone is a considerable benefit. Mohammed Said, on his accession to power, spontaneously abolished the traffic in slaves, before the European powers interfered to secure this great blessing to the peoples of the Ottoman Empire. The most remote provinces under Egyptian rule will now be freed from this hideous sore, as are those provinces the nearest to the confines of civilization.

The measures which have recently been adopted in Soudan, mark therefore an entirely new era; and this reform, the rapid fruits of the Viceroy's journey, deservedly confers the highest honour on the Egyptian Government.

Other measures of grave importance, undertaken by His Highness the Viceroy, likewise merit the esteem of Europe. From a respect for regular government, and a feeling of disinterestedness, Mohammed Said has separated for the future his personal expenses from those of the state. He has created, in the language of representative institutions, a Civil List. To any one at all acquainted with the East, this is an unheard-of progress, and at the same time a grand example. Mohammed Said has moreover divided the Finance Ministry into two principal sections,—receipts and disbursements; and he has centralized in

these all the public accounts concerning the revenues and expenditure of every kind and from every source. The introduction of such regularity is most important to the Egyptian Government. The Consuls-General, and the foreign residents in Egypt, will rejoice at this measure; and they can attest sufficiently, that the affairs which they have to negotiate with the Government have never been more rapidly nor more honourably transacted than since the accession of Mohammed Said to power. All the measures here passed in review are new guarantees to foreign commerce, the importance of which every one will feel.

It may be said that property has been constituted in Egypt within the last year, by the liberty granted to the Fellahs to cultivate such marketable commodities as they please, and to sell them freely without any intervention of the authorities; and again, by the power given to landed proprietors to let their lands on lease, to sell, or to transmit by inheritance, as they deem good. This system, established a year ago in Egypt, where the state has no more land to distribute, has extended along the banks of the Upper Nile, from Assouan to Sennaar and Kordofan.

As the prince, on his accession to power, remitted to the poor cultivators all the arrears of taxes which they owed to the treasury, the immediate result of this enlightened generosity has been to put into culti-

vation 100,000 feddans, which were burdened with arrears of, in some cases, thirty years and more. The proprietors, finding it impossible to clear off such a load of debt, let them go out of cultivation. Thanks to the magnanimity of the prince, labour has returned to the soil, which may henceforth be profitably cultivated without fear either of monopoly or the obstacles of the internal custom-houses, now abolished for ever.

Another amelioration no less important, is the equalization of the conscription for the military service. Henceforth there is no distinction between the Fellahs and the sons of Sheiks; all are, without exception, subjected to the service, and must obey the call of their country. Since the accession of the present Viceroy, however, the average of service has not exceeded a year. Mohammed Said has desired to show by this, that the military service, which was formerly almost always for life, is now only temporary; and, moreover, by passing so many men through the discipline of a regiment, a larger number are formed to all the habits of order, exactitude, and obedience, which are necessarily contracted in this service. It is known, moreover, that within the last few years the army has been greatly reduced, and the service will be proportionately less onerous.

The above are some of the principal reforms which the Government of Egypt has prosecuted and realized



in the interior. Foreigners are aware, from the increase of commerce and of the profits it brings, of all that the administration of the country has effected, in permitting all to establish institutions of credit without any exclusive privileges, such as banks, great enterprises of public utility in the towns, on the river and the canals, etc.

ORDRE DE SON ALTESSE LE VICE-ROI AUX NOUVEAUX GOUVERNEURS DES CINQ PROVINCES DU SOUDAN : LE SENNAAR, LE KORDOFAN, LE TAKA, LE BERBER, ET LE DONGOLAH.

*(Traduction de l'Arabe.)*

Kartoum, 26 Janvier, 1857.

Vous avez appris ce que chérit mon cœur et ce qui m'a préoccupé pour la prospérité du pays et pour le bien-être des populations ; vous connaissez aussi l'étude que je viens de faire pour l'appréciation de ce qui peut développer leur fortune, leur éviter des peines, les mettre à l'abri des vexations, afin qu'elles puissent arriver au comble de la prospérité, en éloignant d'elles l'injustice et l'abus du pouvoir.

Lorsque je me suis rendu dans les provinces du Soudan, et que j'ai vu la misère dans laquelle elles étaient plongées par suite des charges excessives imposées sur les sakiés et les terrains, en outre de celles qu'on leur faisait supporter pour les corvées, les arrérages et autres, j'ai décidé, par esprit de justice, que tout ce système devait être abandonné, et je veux que dorénavant l'impôt soit réparti selon les moyens des populations, afin que les craintes se calment,

que les pays prospèrent, et qu'ils n'aient plus aucun motif de plainte et d'expatriation.

En arrivant à Berber, j'ai demandé aux cheiks et aux habitants qui sont venus au-devant de moi, ce qui pouvait assurer leur tranquillité, et ce qu'ils pouvaient payer sans avoir à en souffrir. Ils m'ont répondu en demandant eux-mêmes que chaque sakié fût imposée à 250 piastres ; mais comme mon amour pour mon peuple me porte à donner le plus de prospérité possible, à me préoccuper de lui pour m'assurer son affection et afin qu'il puisse s'occuper de son bien-être ; et comme en outre je veux rendre à la confiance ceux qui se sont expatriés, afin qu'ils rentrent dans leur patrie, l'esprit libre de toute crainte de vexations, d'injustices et d'impôts exagérés, j'ai ordonné que l'impôt de chaque sakié soit fixé à 200 piastres sans plus.

Quant aux terrains qui n'ont pas de sakiés, j'ordonne que ceux qui se trouvent dans les îles payent un droit de 25 piastres par feddan, et que ceux qui sont situés sur les bords du fleuve soient imposés à 20 piastres par feddan.

En apprenant ces gratifications, inconnues pour elles jusqu'alors, les populations ont été comblées de bonheur et de joie ; leurs cœurs ont été satisfaits. Elles ont oublié ce qu'elles avaient souffert dans le passé ; elles ont promis de vivre entre elles en bonne intelligence, de rappeler les cœurs des absents, afin qu'eux aussi puissent jouir du bénéfice de cette vie heureuse.

Je suis ensuite arrivé à Kartoum pour y attendre les autres cheiks et les notables ; et si ces derniers étaient arrivés promptement, ils auraient éprouvé, par l'effet de ma présence au milieu d'eux, les marques d'une générosité qu'ils n'ont jamais éprouvée encore. Mais puisque je vous ai nommé moudir de cette province, vous devez vous occuper

avant tout et avec zèle du bien-être des populations, de ce qui peut améliorer leur situation, tranquilliser leur moral, et vous devez agir à leur égard avec toute la sollicitude possible.

Vous ferez rentrer les impôts à l'époque des récoltes les plus lucratives ; c'est-à-dire, chaque année vous convoquerez une assemblée dans les trois mois où les travaux des cultures n'occupent pas. Dans cette réunion, vous diviserez mensuellement les rentrées de l'impôt, mais de manière que ces rentrées puissent se faire pendant le courant de l'année, sans fatiguer les populations et sans laisser des arrérages.

Cette assemblée devra être composée de douze à vingt-quatre notables de la province, suivant ce que vous jugerez le plus convenable pour le bien général.

En votre qualité de président de cette assemblée, c'est vous qui aurez à vous occuper de la division de l'impôt ; des moyens les plus favorables pour augmenter le bien-être et la tranquillité, de manière à rendre bien stable l'état des villes et des villages.

Vos décisions devront m'être soumises au fur et à mesure que vous les prendrez. L'assemblée aura en outre à s'occuper de ce qui suit :

Vous licencierez les kachefs qui sont aujourd'hui chefs de districts, ainsi que les soldats qu'ils ont auprès d'eux. Vous n'enverrez plus, ainsi que cela se pratiquait auparavant, de soldats pour faire rentrer l'impôt. Ce sont les villages eux-mêmes qui enverront mensuellement l'impôt du mois par l'entremise de leurs cheiks ; et vous n'userez qu'avec toute justice de la force de la loi pour faire payer les retardataires.

Afin d'encourager les cheiks à s'occuper loyalement de

leurs fonctions, j'ai jugé qu'en récompense de leurs services, il leur sera bonifié une sakié exempte d'impôts sur vingt-cinq, c'est-à-dire que sur un nombre de vingt-cinq sakiés, vous n'aurez à faire rentrer que l'impôt de vingt-quatre ; la vingt-cinquième sera une de celles des cheiks. De même pour les terrains, vous bonifierez aux cheiks, ainsi qu'il est dit ci-dessus, quatre feddans sur cent.

Mais comme il se trouve dans les villages qui sont sur la route des maisons dans lesquelles les allants et les venants reçoivent une hospitalité complète, et que les cheiks à qui ces maisons appartiennent y hébergent et y nourrissent les voyageurs, et qu'ils sont renommés pour leur hospitalité, il est juste que ma générosité pourvoie à ces dépenses. C'est donc à votre appréciation que je laisse le soin d'examiner et de fixer ce qu'il y a à bonifier à ces cheiks, ainsi que vous le jugerez équitable dans la proportion de la position de chaque village.

Vous ferez mesurer les terrains et compter les sakiés par les cheiks, qui devront présenter des états au mouderié ; et si vous envoyez des gens de votre part à cet effet, et qu'il y ait des erreurs, ils en seront responsables.

L'impôt qui sera fixé sur les terrains après mesure, et sur les sakiés, sera payé par celui qui aura semé et récolté, afin que l'on ne puisse pas dire que le débiteur s'est évadé.

L'impôt qui sera fixé, ainsi qu'il est dit plus haut, commencera à courir depuis cette année (1272) solaire ; et ce qui aurait été encaissé depuis le commencement de l'année ira à valoir sur l'impôt de cette année. Conformément à ce règlement, cet impôt sera payé sur les terrains qui seront arrosés par l'inondation, les pluies et les sakiés ; mais si, ce que Dieu préserve, le Nil était trop bas, ou qu'il n'y ait pas eu de pluie, l'impôt ne serait pas dû.

Tout ce dont le gouvernement aura besoin, en comestibles ou autres, en chameaux ou en hommes pour le service, la valeur, le loyer ou la paye des hommes sera toujours payé deux pour cent de plus que ce que payent les habitants entre eux ; et même s'il arrivait que la valeur et le loyer des objets augmentassent, le gouvernement devra toujours payer deux pour cent en sus de l'augmentation ; et dans la crainte que les cheiks, pour démontrer qu'ils prennent l'intérêt du gouvernement, ne déclarent pas la vérité pour le prix et le loyer de la main-d'œuvre, il faut, pour éviter cet inconvénient, que vous ne preniez rien que du consentement libre des propriétaires, afin que par ce moyen la prospérité puisse augmenter, et que ceux du dehors, voyant le prix que paye le gouvernement, soient conduits à payer eux-mêmes davantage, ce qui est le moyen d'accroître le bien-être du pays.

Vous ne prendrez ni hommes ni chameaux en corvées ; vous encouragerez les habitants à semer le blé, l'indigo, le coton et le sésame. Vous ferez tout ce qui est nécessaire pour qu'on puisse presser les cotons et fabriquer convenablement l'indigo, afin d'en faciliter l'exportation et que le pays profite de la valeur ; vous encouragerez aussi les habitants à extraire l'huile du sésame ; car cela est dans leur intérêt.

Il existe aussi beaucoup de forêts qui renferment une immensité de bois tout à fait aptes, les uns à la construction, les autres pour les barques, les autres enfin pour combustible. Il serait bien facile de faire descendre ces bois en Égypte en radeaux, à l'époque du Nil. Vous devez le faire comprendre aux habitants et les encourager à le faire, puisque la plupart ont peu de travaux, et que ce serait pour eux une source nouvelle de bénéfices.

Ce qui consolide la prospérité d'un pays, ce sont les constructions de maisons dans les villes ; mais vous devez faire attention que l'on ne bâtit pas en travers des rues, avançant et rentrant, ainsi que cela se pratique aujourd'hui, mais que les nouvelles bâtisses soient bien alignées, sans que pour cela vous deviez jeter à bas celles qui existent. Les nouvelles bâtisses seulement doivent être élevées d'après ce principe. Chaque maison aura son jardin d'une étendue suffisante pour employer l'eau d'une sakié, d'un chadouf, ou même moins s'il le faut, afin que de cette manière les choses soient bien organisées et l'air meilleur.

Les terrains que vous donnerez à cet effet ne payeront pas d'impôt.

Vous encouragerez les habitants à planter des arbres dans les rues et le long du Nil. Ces plantations d'arbres leur profiteront d'abord par leur produit, et ensuite par le bien qu'elles feront le long des routes et des digues.

Les discussions et les litiges seront examinés et terminés par-devant les cheiks ; mais dans le cas où la solution ne serait pas possible de cette manière, ces procès seront examinés par les moulouks acceptés par les parties ; et dans le cas où ils ne seraient pas de nature à être résolus ainsi, alors ils seront envoyés au mouderié, et ce qui n'aura pu être terminé et jugé sera soumis au conseil pendant les trois mois dont il a été question plus haut.

Le conseil devra examiner et juger ces affaires.

Quant aux affaires qui dépendent de la loi, elles seront jugées par les cadis. Les cheiks et le mouderié tiendront la main à l'exécution des sentences.

Les affaires pour homicides devront être instruites civilement avec le concours du mouderié, examinées par le mehkamé dans le mouderié, et dans l'assemblée dont il est ques-

tion plus haut, en présence du cadî et de tous ceux qu'il appartiendra, pour ensuite m'être soumises par le mouderié.

Les affaires des Bédouins sont du ressort de leur cheik ou du cheik supérieur.

Dans le cas où la position de fortune d'un des habitants s'améliorerait et qu'il demandât dans son village une concession de terrains (de ceux qui ne sont pas cultivés) en sus des siens ; si ces terrains n'ont pas de propriétaires, on devra lui en donner et en envoyer l'avis au mouderié pour en tenir compte. Il en sera de même pour le cas où un des habitants du village, après s'être expatrié, rentrerait au pays ; on devra lui donner des terrains non cultivés. Mais dans le cas où il n'y en aurait pas, on devra lui faciliter les moyens de vivre dans son village, et lui donner, par l'intervention des cheiks et des notables, une quantité de terrain suffisante pour son existence, au prorata de chaque individu. Si l'expatrié avait des terrains à lui, et qu'à cause de son absence d'autres les eussent pris, depuis une époque de plus de quinze ans, il lui sera donné d'autres terrains du village ; mais dans le cas où les quinze ans ne seraient pas complets, on lui rendra ses terrains, que l'on remplacera par d'autres à celui qui en aurait pris possession, et on en prévendra le mouderié ; et dans le cas où il n'y aurait pas dans le village de terrains libres, on agira vis-à-vis de lui comme pour l'expatrié qui n'aurait pas de terrain, comme il est dit plus haut. Et si des expatriés de ceux qui n'ont pas de terrains dans leur village, ou dans le village desquels on ne trouverait pas des terrains libres pour les leur donner, désiraient prendre, en payant l'impôt, des terrains abandonnés sans propriétaires et n'attendant à aucun village, et y bâtir un nouveau village pour y résider et y vivre, on peut leur en donner sans difficulté.

Attendu que l'impôt qui concerne les Bédouins est fixé, et que, d'après ma volonté, je vous donnerai les ordres pour les répartir entre les tribus, et pour fixer aux cheiks les bonifications attribuées à leurs postes et pour l'hospitalité; néanmoins, comme l'impôt de la tribu est réparti entre les individus avec la connaissance de leur cheik, et que cette répartition n'est pas connue au mouderié; par conséquent, si un Bédouin n'avait pas sa tranquillité dans sa tribu, et qu'il voulût aller vivre dans une autre tribu; puisqu'il est libre de sa personne, et qu'en le forçant à rester dans sa tribu ce serait augmenter son mal, ce qui est contraire à ma volonté, vous ne vous opposerez pas à ce qu'il réside dans la tribu qu'il aura choisie. Mais l'impôt qu'il payait dans sa tribu sera déduit de ce qu'il doit payer, et sera ajouté à celui de la tribu dans laquelle il aura fixé sa résidence.

Si un Bédouin sème des terres dans un village, et qu'il soit débité de l'impôt et qu'il le paye, il ne devra pas payer deux impôts: c'est-à-dire un impôt dans sa tribu, et un impôt sur ces terrains. Ce serait contraire à la justice; et j'ai décidé que toutes les fois qu'un Bédouin sèmera des terrains dans un village, la somme des impôts due par lui dans sa tribu et constatée par les états que devront présenter les cheiks de tribus sera décomptée, et il ne payera que le seul impôt des terrains qu'il aura ensemencés; et j'ai ordonné cela, afin d'encourager les Bédouins à pratiquer l'agriculture et à habiter les villes.

Dans l'ordre que je dois vous donner au sujet de l'impôt des Bédouins, je vous donnerai également des ordres pour ce que vous devrez faire au sujet de certaines populations nomades de pasteurs.

Quant aux montagnes qui sont imposées, comme leurs



habitants vivent à l'état de sauvages et qu'il est nécessaire de les amener à un état humain, afin qu'ils ne soient plus enclins à l'éloignement et à la révolte, j'ai décidé de leur abandonner les deux tiers de l'impôt et de ne leur en faire payer qu'un tiers. Vous leur expliquerez qu'ils ne sont pas esclaves, mais qu'ils sont libres.

Ces gens-là ont l'habitude de semer quelques terrains sur les versants des montagnes : vous devrez vous occuper de les encourager et de leur faire comprendre les avantages de la vie des villes, les exhorter à augmenter leurs cultures, et vous efforcer de les convaincre, afin de vous les attirer. Expliquez-leur bien que, s'ils s'adonnent de cœur à l'agriculture, je les dispenserai de payer l'impôt que j'ai réduit aujourd'hui ; et ils n'auront ainsi à payer que l'impôt des seuls terrains qu'ils cultiveront, quand même cet impôt serait inférieur à celui qu'ils payent pour leurs montagnes, et vous les traiterez de cette manière pour leur tranquillité et de façon à les attirer dans la voie de la civilisation. Si même, dans vos conférences pour leur expliquer cela et pour les y engager, ils vous demandaient d'enlever cet impôt, pourvu qu'ils promissent de s'adonner à l'agriculture en payant seulement l'impôt des terrains, vous accepterez et vous me soumettrez la question, afin que j'agisse avec eux selon leurs désirs, dans le seul but de leur inspirer l'amour du bien-être et de la vie des villes, et de les mettre ainsi à l'abri des vicissitudes auxquelles ils sont exposés.

Vous agirez ainsi avec les habitants des montagnes qui vivent à l'état de sauvages et comme des brutes ; mais quant aux habitants des montagnes qui, comme ceux de Fengh, sont un peu plus civilisés, je vous donnerai mes ordres pour les montagnes dont les cheiks sont venus auprès de moi. Quant à celles dont les cheiks ne sont pas venus, vous tâche-

rez de vous entendre avec eux ; et après avoir conféré avec leurs cheiks, vous me ferez savoir ce qu'ils peuvent payer facilement, sans difficulté pour eux, et vous me remettrez un état détaillé de l'impôt actuel et de ce qu'ils désirent payer, afin que je vous donne mes ordres en conséquence.

Vous devrez donc réunir les cheiks et les notables, leur lire mon ordre et leur faire comprendre ce que, dans mon amour pour mon peuple, j'ai décidé de faire pour eux.

Lorsque je suis arrivé à Berber et à Chindi, j'ai nommé les cheiks et les molouks selon les vœux des habitants et d'après leur choix. Les cheiks de quelques villages ne sont pas venus. Vous réglerez les choses de cette manière pour la province de Dongolah, et vous les complétez pour les villages des provinces de Berber et de Gaulein, pour lesquelles elles n'ont pas eu lieu. Vous prendrez pour cheiks et pour molouks ceux qui auront été choisis par les notables et par les habitants, et vous leur donnerez vos sages conseils, afin qu'ils se conduisent bien et qu'ils évitent avec soin tout ce qui pourrait amener l'éloignement des populations.

Examinez les affaires ; rendez la justice à chacun sans partialité et suivant toute équité. Si quelqu'un mérite la prison pour quelque délit, vous vous occuperez de terminer de suite cette affaire, afin que le coupable ne reste pas trop longtemps en prison ; car, quand même la prison serait nécessaire pour punir quelqu'un d'une mauvaise action, et qu'il dût en résulter un bien, afin qu'il ne retombe plus dans le mal à l'avenir, et qu'en même temps cette punition soit un exemple pour que les autres ne se hasardent pas à commettre des actions qui méritent cette punition, néanmoins, comme ceux qui sont emprisonnés sont mes sujets, ma clémence et ma pitié ne permettent pas qu'ils restent en prison

plus de temps qu'ils ne méritent ; et je veux ainsi les traiter avec miséricorde.

En cas de discussions entre les habitants et les Bédouins, ou entre les Bédouins entre eux, vous punirez immédiatement les coupables.

Si vous faites appeler un cheik ou un notable, et qu'il se refuse à venir, comme ce refus de sa part est inconvenant envers l'autorité, et qu'il aura ainsi obligé l'autorité, à cause de son refus, à le faire venir par la force, vous considérerez un pareil cas comme un acte de révolte, et vous le ferez venir par la force.

Quoiqu'en considérant tout ce que je viens de faire en faveur des habitants de ces pays, soit en diminuant les impôts, soit en enlevant les corvées, soit en empêchant les vexations et les injustices, il ne semble pas nécessaire d'y entretenir des troupes, puisque les habitants seront nécessairement forcés, pour la conservation de leurs propriétés, de se défendre contre quiconque viendrait les attaquer, pour ne pas être exposés à se voir ruinés, néanmoins j'ai installé un nombre suffisant de régiments dans les diverses localités. Soyez donc sur vos gardes pour repousser quiconque vous attaquerait ; et s'il est nécessaire que les provinces s'entraident entre elles, faites-le pour qu'il n'arrive pas de mal à aucune des parties sous votre direction.

Les canons qui se trouvent dans le Soudan étant de gros canons que l'on ne peut traîner ni dans les montagnes ni dans le sable, et à cause de cela n'étant d'aucune utilité, puisque les canons ne sont utiles que si l'on peut les transporter d'un lieu dans un autre ; et considérant que les canons qui sont au Soudan ne se trouvent pas dans ces conditions, j'ai ordonné qu'on en brise quelques-uns et qu'on réunisse les autres.

J'ai laissé dans le Gheziré (Sennaar) ce qui est nécessaire en canons légers ; le reste se trouve à Korosko. J'ai ordonné qu'on le transporte à Kartoum ; et lorsque tous les canons seront réunis, on enverra dans chaque partie du pays ce qui y sera nécessaire.

Il est également de toute première nécessité, et c'est là mon plus vif désir, d'avoir en tous temps de vos nouvelles sur la situation du pays et sur ce qui peut y arriver. Il faut donc que vous organisiez un service de poste pour le Gheziré (Sennaar), Kordofan et Taka, de Gheziré à Abou-Khamat. Pour chaque dix heures de marche de chameau, soit pour cinq heures environ de marche à dromadaire, vous établirez des stations de deux dromadaires qui se remettront mutuellement les dépêches. Vous leur ferez préparer des habitations pour qu'ils y restent toujours. Vous vous occuperez des moyens de pourvoir à leur nourriture, ainsi que de celle de leurs dromadaires. Vous mettrez trois stations entre Abou-Khamat et Korosko : la première à Abou-Khamat ; la deuxième à Marat ; la troisième à Korosko, afin de faciliter l'arrivée de vos dépêches. Vous établirez dix dromadaires pour le service du mouderié.

Si quelqu'un vous attaquait et que le nombre de vos ennemis fût grand, et que vous ayez besoin de secours du Caire, expédiez-m'en immédiatement l'avis ; et au même moment je vous enverrai de quoi faire trembler leur cœur, les détruire et les disperser ; et je viendrai moi-même, afin de punir ceux qui auront osé susciter des troubles et faire le mal.

Sachez bien que les préparatifs nécessaires seront toujours faits au Caire, ainsi que ceux pour le cas de nécessité de ma présence avec des troupes que je conduirai avec moi au Soudan ; et je punirai d'une manière exemplaire ceux que

je reconnâitrai coupables. Soyez convaincu aussi que si j'apprends que les habitants ont eu à supporter des vexations de votre part ou de celle des cheiks, aucun de vous ne sera épargné. Sachez-le bien et agissez en conséquence, puisque tel est mon ordre et qu'il vous exprime ma volonté.

(L. S.) (Cachet de S. A. le Vice-roi.)

THE END.











